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ABSTRACT

This casebook, developed in collaboration with 22 mentor teachers in the Los Angeles (California) Unified School District, provides illustrative vignettes, written by the mentor teachers themselves, of their work with first-year teachers. The vignettes describe the circumstances of each event, its consequences, and the ongoing thoughts and feelings of the participants. All the vignettes are grouped by the principle illustrated or questions raised, and brief analytical commentaries by the editors accompany each case grouping. After an introductory explanation of the methodology, the vignettes in chapter 2 focus on the process of mentoring: establishing the working relationship, individual consultation, observing and coaching, and modeling. Chapter 3 turns to aspects of the relationship between mentors and principals, with vignettes grouped around issues such as confidentiality and evaluation, the appropriate match between the two roles, and continuity of support. Chapter 4 addresses issues affecting the life of a mentor: novice teachers and novice mentors, rewards, frustrations, relations with others, and friendships with other teachers. Each chapter concludes with an annotated bibliography. (TE)

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THE MENTOR TEACHER CASEBOOK

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THE MENTOR TEACHER CASEBOOK

November 1987

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About FWL

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development is located in San Francisco. With primary funding from the U.S. Department of Education, it conducts research, provides technical assistance and training, and offers evaluation support to schools and education agencies. In addition, for 22 years, FWL has been a federally designated regional laboratory with the charge to provide service and support for the public schools in Arizona, California, Nevada and Utah. Other funding comes from state and private sources, and addresses the entire range of educational concerns—from pre-school experiences through adult literacy.

About ERIC

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system operated by the U.S. Department of Education. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, one of several such units in the system, was established at the University of Oregon in 1966. ERIC serves the eduation community by disseminating research results and other resouce information that can be used in developing more effective educational programs. Research results and journal articles are announced regularly in ERIC's index and abstract bulletins.

Besides processing documents and journal articles, the Clearinghouse prepares bibliographies, literature reviews, monographs, and other interpretive research studies on topics in its educational area.

FOREWORD

The Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management are pleased to make this publication available to their respective clienteles. The Far West Laboratory has a rich history of helping chart new paths in education, while the Clearinghouse is committed to disseminating information useful for the operation and improvement of elementary and secondary schools.

The Mentor Teacher Casebook is an example of the Laboratory's commitment to building and using practitioner knowledge. In partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District, FWL developed real-life vignettes for role playing and case study activities in workshops for training mentor teachers. As a training document, this volume works well. At the same time, the content of the vignettes yields a goldmine of information on the types of help new and beginning teachers need and want.

Presenting the vignettes and training discussions in a casebook format is an additional contribution of this volume. There is too little room for teachers' own voices in materials used to train them. The practical knowledge and insight that years of experience provide are often used to train new professionals in fields other than education. This volume confronts that void with humor, pathos and know-how—indeed, with the very qualities that go into truly fine teaching.

Dean H. Nafziger
Director
Far West Laboratory
for Educational Research
and Development

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Educational Management

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This book is dedicated to all new and veteran mentor teachers who have assumed the invaluable task of supporting newcomers to the teaching profession.

INTRODUCTION

The *Mentor Teacher Casebook* represents the first in a series of Close-to-the-Classroom Casebooks published by the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (FWL), as part of the Effective Support for Beginning Teachers Program. This casebook was developed collaboratively by a researcher from Far West Laboratory, a staff developer/researcher from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), and 22 mentor teachers from LAUSD. The book contains case literature on the work of mentor teachers written by the teachers themselves.

These Close-to-the-Classroom Casebooks are part of a larger effort to build and use practitioner knowledge in teaching and teacher education. While research-based knowledge of the teaching experience has grown in volume and usefulness, practitioner analyses remain a relatively small part of a teacher's information about teaching and learning. The profession has not developed mechanisms to record and preserve a particular teacher's accumulated knowledge about teaching. When teachers retire or otherwise leave teaching, their understanding, methods, and materials which should form a legacy to the profession, the community, and the school are generally lost. By combining research and practitioner knowledge, the Close-to-the-Classroom Casebooks contribute to the growing body of case literature on the practitioner experience.

What do we mean by a "case"? A case is not simply any narrative account of an event. To call something a case is to make a theoretical claim — that it is a "case of something," or an instance of a larger class (L. Shulman, 1986). For example, a vignette that describes a teacher observing a colleague teach a lesson and later engaging that colleague in an analysis of the lesson is a case of coaching. Cases may also be exemplars of principles, describing by their detail a general pattern of practice.

All the narratives (or vignettes as we often call them) included in this casebook meet this criterion. They have been selected because they are representative of a larger class of experiences. They are in that sense cases.

The cases presented in this book are narrative vignettes, written by practicing mentor teachers, about an event or series of events. The vignettes describe the circumstances of each event, its consequences, and the ongoing thoughts and feelings of the participants. Unlike case studies, which are analytical documents written by outside observers or researchers, these vignettes are brief accounts about the challenges, successes, and failures that mentors face as they attempt to assert their new roles as mentor teachers. Some of the vignettes are accompanied by reactions of other mentors. The reactions give a multiple perspective of the situation described. All of the vignettes are grouped by the principles illustrated or questions raised. Brief analytical commentaries by the editors accompany each case grouping.

This casebook describes LAUSD mentors' work with first-year teachers. The first year is the critical year of teaching, often determining whether a person will stay in the teaching profession and what type of teacher the person will become. Unfortunately, beginning teachers are typically left to work things out on their own in a sink-or-swim or trial-and-error fashion. They typically concentrate on survival skills alone, and are likely to focus on what is necessary to keep the class under control. Concentrating on survival skills may encourage beginning teachers to explore only a narrow range of alternatives, and discourages them from continuing to learn and to hold high standards for effective practice (Feiman-Nemser, 1983).

The literature on teacher training reveals few precedents for providing teachers with intensive help with pedagogical practices. Historically, support for beginning teachers has been in the form of informal buddy systems, in place in many school systems for decades. With no specific role, a buddy typically acts as a friend and a sounding board for the beginning teacher.

The most recent reform documents (e.g., Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, *A Nation Prepared*, 1986; The Holmes Group, *Tomorrow's Teachers*, 1986) have argued for a more formal differentiation of teaching roles within schools. A key function to be formalized, they argue, is that of guiding the development of new teachers or of rendering assistance to veteran colleagues. This is seen as one of the important functions of lead or mentor teachers.

Many states have already begun to formalize the role of lead teachers by developing clearer selection and training procedures and defining specific responsibilities. For example, Tennessee, South Carolina, Utah and Florida have created career ladder plans for teachers. California's Mentor Teacher Program has

several elements of a career ladder. It introduces the concept of differentiated responsibilities and stipends for excellent tachers.

The California Mentor Teacher Program is funded by the state's Hart-Hughes Education Reform Act of 1983 (SB 813). This legislation, in effect as of January 1, 1984, is intended to reward and retain excellent teachers and to contribute to school improvement. The statute allocates funds to participating districts on a formula basis, allowing $4000 stipends for designated mentors, and $2000 per mentor for district implementation. The mentors' primary role is to guide and assist new teachers; they may also guide and assist more experienced teachers and develop special curricula. The statute leaves considerable latitude for California's diverse school districts to design their own programs.

We would like to thank the 22 mentor teachers who contributed to this volume. These outstanding teachers not only spent hours writing compelling vignettes about their interactions with assigned colleagues, principals, and other teachers, they also made useful suggestions about topics for the vignettes and format of the casebook. Without their contributions, this book would not exist.

The publication of teachers' writings typically produces a tension between the protection afforded by anonymity and the credit earned through authorship. Though the mentors were enthusiastic about being published, they preferred not to have their names associated with specific vignettes. We resolved this dilemma by listing the contributors alphabetically on the title page, but leaving unattributed the authorship of each vignette.

We would also like to recognize several individuals who made valuable contributions: Norm Marks and Judith Warren Little for establishing the link between FWL and LAUSD and providing feedback on various drafts of the casebook; Elsie Gee and Carolyn Cates for their enlightening comments; and our typists Margo Marvin and Rosemary De La Torre for their patience and suggestions. A special tribute goes to FWL's editor, Linda Nelson, whose enthusiasm for the project was a source of constant support.

Judith H. Shulman, Far West Laboratory
Joel A. Colbert, Los Angeles Unified School District

CHAPTER ONE
AN OUTLINE AND METHODOLOGY

The *Mentor Teacher Casebook* draws from Far West Laboratory's two-year study of first-year implementation of the California Mentor Teacher Program. The cases take the form of narrative vignettes, written by practicing mentor teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), about an event or series of events. The vignettes describe the circumstances of each event, its consequences, and the ongoing thoughts and feelings of the participants. Some of the vignettes are accompanied by reactions by other mentor teachers.

The casebook is directed primarily to mentor teachers, or master teachers and lead teachers, who are either currently engaged in the support of new teachers or who look forward to becoming a mentor. It serves two purposes. First, as a guide to understanding, cases can help mentors generalize about the recurring patterns of practice. Mentors can understand their experiences not as unique occurrences, but as instances of a more general pattern or a set of principles of practice. Second, as a guide to action, cases enable mentors to see how other mentor teachers confronted situations similar to their own. Cases also suggest practices that mentors might try out with their assigned teachers (Shulman, 1986).

The vignettes presented are not a prescription for correct behavior. Rather, they are tools to help mentor teachers develop their thinking and decisionmaking capabilities. We hope that casebook readers will reflect on the emerging role of the mentor and will share observations with their colleagues. We also hope that the readers will be stimulated to write their own cases and contribute to the accumulation of case knowledge about the mentor role.

The casebook is divided into three main chapters. The first introduces the general process of mentoring and discusses how mentors provide assistance to novice teachers. Here mentors describe how they negotiated initial contacts with their assigned colleagues, how they began their work, and what the ground rules (or lack of ground rules) were for their work together. The chapter also gives successful and unsuccessful examples of the instructional support process.

The second chapter consists of a collection of cases that are particularly relevant to administrators. Some vignettes illustrate the importance both of an appropriate match between mentor and colleague by subject area and grade level and of close contact and continued support. Other cases deal with the fine line between confidential assistance and evaluation of new teachers and the uncertainties in the emerging new relationships between mentors and principals.

The third chapter examines both the positive and negative aspects of what it feels like to be promoted to the status of mentor teacher. Several discussions focus on the rewards of helping other teachers and the personal professional development that accompanies the new role. However, mentors also write about their apprehension in asserting their new status. They discuss jealousy and hostility directed toward them from some other teachers and the burden of being a model teacher. Mentors' guilt at leaving their classes with a substitute and the need to renegotiate some old relationships are also highlighted.

Each chapter contains four parts:

- introductory commentary about issues and questions raised by the vignettes, both for the chapter and sections within the chapter;
- the vignettes, grouped by themes;
- sample discussion questions for each vignette; and
- an annotated bibliography.

Authors of the Cases

The 22 authors are active mentor teachers in LAUSD and are participating in a master's degree program designed specifically for mentor teachers through California State University, Los Angeles. They were all enrolled in a course in staff development, taught by Joel Colbert. The cases were written as part of the course requirement. Each mentor wrote at least five vignettes.

These mentor teachers were assigned to assist from three to 14 new teachers. They also performed additional professional duties, such as conducting staff development sessions, writing grant proposals, and assisting the principal in school planning.

Selecting Vignettes

Of a total of 140 cases, 49 vignettes were selected for the casebook based on the principles or questions that each vignette illustrates. The general appeal of the story told was also considered. An attempt was made to include at least one vignette from each member of the class. Categories were developed in answer to the question, "What issue is reflected in this case?"

Potential Uses of This Casebook

Though this book was intended for use in training new and experienced mentor teachers, others may also find it valuable.

- Administrators and policymakers can understand the complexity of the new reform from the perspective of the participants themselves.
- Teacher educators can see the relationship between mentoring new teachers and supervising student teachers. The difficulties of establishing a working relationship and coaching neophytes are inherent in both kinds of activities.
- Teachers may be stimulated to write cases about their work so that they can learn from one another.

The cases illustrate principles of common mentor practice and can serve as a guide to understanding and action. Example discussion questions for each vignette appear at the end of each chapter. Users of the casebook can either use the given questions as discussion tools or substitute questions of their own. For educators who wish to pursue the research literature, an annotated bibliography is presented at the end of each chapter.

Staff developers should feel free to pick and choose individual cases that would be appropriate for their own staff development activities. Gaps in the present document can be filled with cases by other mentor teachers. For example, only one mentor writing here has described the use of reflective interviewing and problem-solving. This may indicate that LAUSD had not emphasized this strategy in their training sessions. Staff developers are adding an instructional component that will enable mentors to use reflection in their feedback sessions. Mentors will also be asked to write cases that describe the use of this strategy.

Staff developers in LAUSD have used selected cases in several situations. For example, writing and presenting cases has been used in a graduate course in staff development for mentor teachers. District staff development personnel will incorporate case material in future coursework. Individual cases are incorporated into the inservice activities of new and experienced teachers. A leader's guide which includes sample cases is currently being developed for the 30-hour series of workshops. Pilot testing of the use of case material has been particularly effective during workshops on observation and coaching.

District staff are also using individual cases during administrator training. Since the mentor role is new in Los Angeles, and principals and mentors are expected to work together, both groups need to understand one another's needs. Cases provide opportunities for administrators to study and discuss the mentor role and responsibilities. Mentor teachers and administrators may also discuss the cases together as they begin to grapple with issues of joint instructional leadership.

In any case, readers are encouraged to be creative with the uses of case material and to communicate with the editors about some of the ways that these cases become incorporated into local programs.

Site Description

The Los Angeles Unified School District is a compelling partner for FWL for several reasons. One is the sheer magnitude and diversity of the district. As the second largest school district in the United States, it has over 27,000 teachers and enrolls over 570,000 students. In 1985-1986, LAUSD selected over 900 mentor teachers. These mentors serve a three-year term.

Second, the mentors' primary role is to support teacher trainees and other first-year teachers. This differs from mentor programs in other districts that focus more on curriculum development and out-of-class support. Because of natural attrition, the large number of retiring teachers, and difficult working conditions in some of the schools, the district has had to hire over 2,000 new teachers for each of the past two years. This number is projected to increase in the near future due to increasing population.

Third, several regions in LAUSD have year-round schools. In these regions, teachers' salaries are paid over a 12-month period. The term "on track" refers to the period of time that teachers teach their assigned classes; "off track" refers to the period of time that teachers are on vacation.

New teachers in the district fall into one of three categories. Approximately 50 percent are the probationary teachers who graduate from a university with a valid teaching credential and have had prior classroom experience including, but not limited to, student teaching. Those who teach in the remaining two categories require a temporary credential.

Approximately 45 percent of the teachers participate in the Joint Venture Program. To teach in Los Angeles, they must participate in a joint venture program with a cooperating university and work towards their teaching credential. Until that time they are employed on an emergency/provisional basis, but they have their own classroom and are full-time teachers. They receive assistance from university supervisors, mentors, and other school site personnel.

The third and smallest category, the Teacher Trainee Program, includes a select group of teachers for grades 7-12. They are assigned to classes in areas of critical need and participate in a two-year program organized by the district where they receive training for their district credential. Their classes meet during the summer and weekly during the school year. In addition, trainees have their own classrooms and teach full-time. Support is provided by the staffs of the Human Resources Development Branch in each region or division, but some district administrators feel that the real key to their training program's success are the mentor teachers and other school site personnel who provide assistance to the trainees on a daily basis. At the conclusion of the program, trainees receive a teaching credential and credit towards permanent status within the district.

Implementation of the Mentor Program

The mentor program in LAUSD is designed primarily to assist teacher trainees in grades 7-12 and new and inexperienced teachers at all grade levels. The mentor teacher's responsibilities as outlined in district guidelines include (1) assisting new and inexperienced teachers; (2) planning and leading staff development sessions in order to provide opportunities for teachers to share ideas with other successful teachers; (3) assisting teachers with solving problems in curriculum, classroom management, and discipline; (4) sharing knowledge of new materials, curriculum, and teaching methods; and (5) explaining district goals and instructional programs to parents and other community persons or groups.

Funding from the California Mentor Teacher Program provided mentors with 23 substitute teacher days, a $350 allocation for mileage, and a $100 allocation for materials. To demonstrate its support to the Teacher Trainee Program, the district provided secondary mentors with an additional 70 substitute teacher hours. The time and manner in which mentors render service is determined on an individual basis in collaboration with their principal and the regional or divisional superintendent. But first, all mentors complete a 30-hour series of training workshops which are somewhat broad in focus. Effective instruction, cooperative learning models, content instruction, and classroom observation strategies are among the workshop topics.

A House of Babel

The following vignette written by one of the mentor teachers in LAUSD perhaps best describes the complexity of working in that district.

The Los Angeles Unified School District is many things, but mostly it is large. From the foot of the Tehachapi Mountains in Mission Hills to the harbor in San Pedro, it is bordered by, and often surrounds, other school districts. Within the district, it is possible to find schools similar to those found in any imaginable American community. There are also schools unique to Los Angeles. The ethnic diversity of the inner-city schools and the educational challenges that it presents can overwhelm even the best teacher. This reality must be firmly grasped in order to understand the special problems faced by new, inexperienced teachers.

Los Angeles' inner-city high schools frequently enroll in excess of 2500 students. Of that number, approximately one-third must learn English in special English as a second language (ESL) programs. Another third of the student body may have only recently phased out of the ESL program into mainstream courses alongside their peers.

Unlike some geographical areas where the student body is ethnically homogeneous, in Los Angeles the student population in many schools is very diverse. Spanish is the dominant foreign language, but Spanish-speaking students come from nearly every country in the southern hemisphere. From Asia there are large numbers of Thai, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Chinese students as well as an increasing number from Japan. Pacific Islanders, Poles and Russians attend many schools as well. Both sides of the Sahara are generally represented, adding Arabic and several tribal African languages to the mix. Many schools have 30 or more languages represented on campus.

It may require a vivid imagination to envision an 18-year-old student, labeled a tenth grader, standing in front of the teacher's desk, enrollment card in hand, not understanding a single word. This is a frequent experience for the unsuspecting art, home economics, ROTC or math teacher. It results when the counseling office feels that a particular student can deal with a relatively language-free class. Unfortunately, because the inner city has the greatest need for teachers, this scenario occurs often for a teacher trainee* or emergency/provisional** who has virtually no classroom experience to fall back on.

Working with cultural, linguistic, and academic diversity becomes more complex when one considers such items as the daily bulletin, open house, athletic teams, cheerleaders, and leadership class, to mention only a few. Of special concern is the way these variables affect the universally American organization, the PTA. The majority of parents of many LAUSD students do not have the language facility to comprehend the purpose of the organization. Nor do they understand United States schooling well enough to participate actively or promote a parent group.

** Teacher trainee: a secondary teacher with a bachelor's degree in the subject area she teaches who is enrolled in teacher preparation courses taught by the district.

** Emergency/provisional: a secondary teacher with a bachelor's degree in a subject area she teaches enrolled in teacher preparation courses at a local university.

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Case Methodology

Clark, C. M., Floden, R. E., & Florio-Ruane, S. (eds.) (1985). *The hidden world of teaching and learning case studies of American classrooms*. Unpublished manuscript at Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

This manuscript presents a collection of case studies, written by researchers and teacher educators with differing views of what is important in the classroom episodes described. Each case includes teachers' and students' explanations of classroom events as well as the researchers' analyses of the events within a particular theoretical framework. The case studies — individually and as a set — mix description, recollection, explanation, and opinion.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. Wittrock (ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching*. New York: Macmillan.

This chapter is a state-of-the-art essay on qualitative or interpretive research methods. Erickson argues that teachers can do this kind of research well by reflecting on their own practice and writing about it. Teachers have not been asked, as part of their job description, to reflect on their practice and to communicate their thoughts to others. But if teaching is to come of age as a profession, teachers need to examine their practice critically and hold themselves accountable for their actions as teachers.

Merry, R. W. (1954). Preparation to teach a case. In M. P. McNair (ed.), *The case method at the Harvard Business School*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

This article suggests strategies for teaching using the case method. The instructor must be thoroughly conversant with the case as a whole, must assess principal areas for exploration and discussion and devise key questions to stimulate discussion. The instructor needs to be able to anticipate student questions and gauge how to address those questions. For purposes of facilitating future use of the case, the instructor may find it useful to jot down notes soon after the class session, touching on matters which need correction and including these notes in a case folder to be reviewed before preparing a new case outline.

Merry, R. W. (1967). *The usefulness of the case method for training in administration*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association, Inc., Miami, Florida.

This paper describes how cases ought to be used during instruction. A case is defined as a "description of a situation or problem actually faced by an administrator, and requiring analysis, decision and the planning of a course of action." The case method is defined as the student discussion of a sequence of cases planned to develop within the students (1) an understanding of some of the problems important to an administrator, (2) some proficiency in producing useful ideas about ways of effectively handling the kinds of problems studied, and (3) good judgement in planning effective execution by the organization.

Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher, 15*(4), 4–14.

Shulman argues that the development of a case literature on teaching would help us to understand the knowledge base of teaching. While cases themselves are richly described events or sequences of events, the knowledge they represent is what makes them cases. Shulman elaborates on the advantages of case literature and case knowledge in the paper.

Silver, P. (1986). Case records: A reflective approach to administrator development. *Theory Into Practice, 25*(3), 161–167.

Case records are prepared by professional practitioners (e.g., member principals at the Center for Advancing Principalship Excellence). The records are in a standardized form, include quantitative and impressionistic information, and consist of three elements: the facts of the case at the outset, a plan of action, and the results of the action. They are available to researchers and practitioners and can serve a variety of functions, such as identifying successful and unsuccessful solutions.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Support for Beginning Teachers

A nation prepared: Teachers for the 21st century. (1986). New York: The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy.

Fundamental changes in the internal life of schools hold the greatest promise for transforming teaching into a rewarding and attractive career, say the authors of the Carnegie report. The task force recommends the creation of a career progression for teachers that would culminate in a lead teacher position. Lead teachers would continue to teach, but they would also play a role in setting instructional policy and in providing supervision to neophytes.

Feiman-Nemser, S. (1983). Learning to teach. In L. S. Shulman & G. Sykes (eds.), *Handbook of teaching and policy*. New York: Longman.

Feiman-Nemser views learning as the central feature of teaching and sees all teachers as students. The first year is the critical year of teaching, determining whether a person will stay in the teaching profession and what type of teacher the person will become. Unfortunately, beginning teachers are typically left to their own devices to work things out in a sink-or-swim, trial-and-error fashion. They typically concentrate on what works, and are likely to focus on what is necessary to keep the class under control or to get things done. However, a focus on what works may not be educative in the long run. Concentration on survival skills may encourage beginning teachers to explore only a narrow range of alternatives, and may prevent teachers from a commitment to keep on learning and to hold high standards of effective practice. The chapter suggests a program of collegial support for beginning teachers, accompanied by a school culture that supports learning from teaching.

McLaughlin, M. W., Pfeifer, R. S., Owens, S. O., & Yee, S. (1986). Why teachers won't teach. *Phi Delta Kappan, 67*(6), 420–426.

The issues most central to the health of the teaching profession have to do with the fact that some of our most talented teachers believe that they can't teach, and thus they won't teach. Teachers who won't teach either leave the profession or resign themselves to going through the motions of educating children. These teachers find the process of teaching frustrating, unrewarding, and intolerably difficult. Teachers and school districts need to plan jointly systematic professional development for teachers. An organizational response is particularly important for the induction of new teachers.

Tomorrow's teachers. (1986). East Lansing, MI: The Holmes Group.

The group of education deans that has come to be called the Holmes Group is organized around twin goals: the reform of teacher education and the reform of teaching. Included is a call for the development of a differentiated structure for professional opportunity and a realignment of responsibilities for teachers and administrators.

Wildman, T., & Borko, H. (1985). *Beginning teacher's handbook*. Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Polytechnic, College of Education.

By reviewing some of the major patterns of findings in the last 15 years, the authors attempt to sensitize beginning teachers to the usefulness and limitations in using research findings to improve their teaching. The authors view teachers as problem solvers who are guided by reflective, systematic thinking about teaching and the learning process. They suggest different ways of organizing information, presenting instruction, and managing classrooms.

CHAPTER TWO
THE PROCESS OF MENTORING

- *Establishing The Working Relationship*
- *Individual Consultation*
- *Observation And Coaching*
- *Modeling*

Mentors can help neophytes in many ways. This chapter identifies five major areas, beginning with the easiest kind of assistance and ending with the most difficult.

- At the beginning of the year, mentors can help new teachers learn about the procedural demands of the school, such as attendance and grading procedures.
- Mentors can provide opportunities for teachers to observe other teachers so they have access to several kinds of models.
- Mentors can share their own knowledge about new materials, unit planning, curriculum development, and teaching methods.
- Mentors can assist teachers with classroom management and discipline.
- Mentors can engage teachers in reflection about their own practice and can help them adapt new strategies for their own classrooms.

All types of assistance discussed in this chapter require both direct observation and additional training, and are important parts of the mentoring process. The first four types help teachers survive in their classrooms, but the last one represents the key to continuous learning. Engaging teachers in an analysis of their teaching provides opportunities for teachers to continue learning about their craft and gain a sense of self-sufficiency.

This kind of teacher analysis is called coaching — one teacher observes another teacher conduct a lesson, makes a record of the lesson that is revealing and convincing to the teacher, and then engages the teacher in an analysis of the lesson. This technique is relatively new and rewarding for the learner — if done well. This chapter highlights coaching techniques.

The success of coaching appears to depend on several conditions: (1) collaboratively agreeing on the purposes for the observation, as in a pre-conference; (2) demonstrating credibility by offering analysis supported by concrete evidence, e.g., a written record; (3) engaging in inquiry or problem solving during the pre- and post-observation conferences; (4) creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust; and (5) ensuring that help is confidential.

Reciprocity between mentor and colleague plays a central role in the relationship. The teacher must defer to the mentor's asserted competence, but teachers do not like to be told what to do as if they were a blank slate. The mentor must provide credible recognition of the teacher's performance by addressing teaching rather than the teacher.

All of the mentor teachers in this casebook were eager to help and attempt to use coaching and observation with their assigned teachers. The mentors had participated in training workshops and were anxious to try out their skills. However, the mentor teacher was only one part of the relationship. The other party had to be assigned and convinced of the relationship's advantages. If the mentor-colleague relationship failed, the mentor could be all dressed up with no place to go (Bird, 1985).

The cases in this chapter describe the tactics used by the mentors to support their assigned teachers. The chapter is divided into four parts. The first describes the difficulties of establishing a working relationship with teachers and illustrates how some mentors initiated contacts. Following is a pair of cases which describe the importance of individual consultation. The third section consists of vignettes which describe strategies mentors used to coach assigned teachers. The last section describes the advantages and disadvantages of modeling by the mentor teacher in another teacher's own classroom.

ESTABLISHING THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP

The First Meeting

The Right Track

No Happy Ending

The Real Breakthrough

Caught Off Guard

Reluctant To Ask

Surprised

Never Got A Chance

Discussion Questions

One of the first challenges that mentors face is establishing a working relationship with their colleagues. "If they assert themselves too strongly, or inappropriately, they may be perceived as rude or disruptive. If they assert themselves too little or unskillfully, they may be ineffective. For either error, they are likely to be criticized, rejected or ignored" (Bird & Little, 1985). At risk is the possibility that an excellent teacher could be an unsuccessful mentor.

The cases in this chapter describe participating mentors' walk along the narrow path. They realized that the initial interactions would set the stage for a longer lasting relationship. Deciding how aggressively to assert their expertise in a credible manner was a challenge.

Most teachers in the vignettes treated mentors' offers of support with some degree of caution. Traditionally, direct assistance has only been offered to teachers whom principals suspect are having difficulty. It is reasonable that such offers are greeted with skepticism.

This section addresses several questions: How does a mentor manage a group of novice teachers who are at different schools? How do they encourage teachers to request assistance? How do they observe another teacher when they haven't been asked to? What can be done when a teacher refuses all offers of help?

"The First Meeting" describes how one mentor tried to meet the demands of a group of teachers at different schools. A group meeting to establish ground rules was effective.

Other cases describe strategies that mentors used for establishing contact and asserting their expertise. These cases represent a continuum of assertion from useless to rude. "The Right Track" is on the "useless" side of the continuum and "No Happy Ending" is on the "rude" side. In the former, the mentor's general offer of assistance to a group of teachers was useless. Often new teachers are either embarrassed to request any help or do not know how a mentor can be useful. Thus, it was not until the mentor established precisely how she could be helpful with individual teachers, and began to establish some collaborative agreements, that relationships began to evolve. (Since the authors of the vignettes preferred anonymity, all references to unknown mentors, teachers, and administrators will use feminine personal pronouns throughout the book whenever it is necessary to avoid the cumbersome use of terms such as "s/he" and "he or she.")

In the latter vignette, "No Happy Ending," a well meaning mentor embarrassed Ms. F. in front of her students — a cardinal error. From then on, the mentor's credibility was damaged. It is difficult to recoup any sense of trust after this kind of experience.

The remaining vignettes describe various less extreme tactics to assert assistance. Three of these cases, "The Real Breakthrough," "Caught Off Guard," and "Reluctant to Ask" describe mentors who either waited until an appropriate time or chose an unusual strategy to show their expertise. In all three of the cases, the teachers were initially resistant to their mentor's proposals of assistance. But each mentor's patience, continued availability, and creativity appeared to unlock the door to a constructive relationship.

The fourth case, "Surprised," richly describes a teacher receptive from the onset to her mentor's help, but uncomfortable with the idea of an observation. Two months passed before the teacher finally invited the mentor to watch a lesson. This observation marked a turning point in their relationship, and resulted in several similar requests.

In the last case, "Never Got a Chance," none of the mentor's tactics were successful. Like Ms. F. in "No Happy Ending," the teacher described is older, more experienced, and entered teaching as a second career. Neither individual saw the need for a mentor. This raises some interesting questions: Should older, more experienced neophytes be treated differently from their younger colleagues? What alternative strategies can mentors use with these teachers? What can mentors do when a teacher continues to refuse offers of assistance?

The First Meeting*

This year I have been assigned to work with two teachers from kindergarten, one first-grade and one second-grade teacher. Each teacher is located at a different school site except one who teaches at the same school I do. As you can probably imagine, servicing them all effectively was becoming somewhat of an exhausting task; each teacher had her own particular need, and each felt that hers was of the utmost importance. I needed to formulate an effective management system that would give each teacher quality time since increasing the quantity of time was not an option.

Fortunately, I was able to get substitutes for all four teachers for a day so that we could meet together as a group. When we met, I explained my situation and availability for meeting with each one on a regular basis. We all agreed on a system where I would meet with each mentee three times a month and, if needed, on an emergency basis. Phone calls, of course, were open for any time. In addition we agreed to meet as a group once every two months to regroup, share ideas and visit various science and educational centers. I found that working collectively as a group we were able to come up with alternative ways of scheduling my time effectively so that I felt comfortable and my mentees were comfortable, too.

* At their request the authors of the individual vignettes will remain anonymous.

The Right Track

One dilemma I faced in the beginning of the school year was getting started on the right track with my mentees. My mentees were also quietly perplexed about how to proceed. Some, I felt, even resented my presence and the incentive pay I was receiving as a mentor.

They were also uncomfortable with my open-ended invitation to use me. I later discovered that they felt this might cast me in the role of an aide. At the same time, I was hesitant to propose specific projects with them for fear of stepping on someone's toes. The result of all this was a totally superficial scenario. We were all at a polite distance and rarely in comfortable environs. To get through this phase, I sought out each of my mentees on a one-to-one basis. I made my pitch about working together, and then I went into specifics: "This is what I've done before; this is what I can do for you." Then, I focused on one or two key questions, issues, situations, or problems and addressed them with depth, persistence, imagination and, above all, good humor.

No Happy Ending

Ms. F. came to our school mid-year. I helped her with lesson planning and survival skills the first few weeks. As time went on I assisted her when I could. I didn't see her much, but I blamed it on my involvement with two mentees that administration had asked me to work with intensely. It never dawned on me that she was unhappy or avoiding me.

One day, I went to Ms. F.'s room after the school day had ended to ask her if she needed any help. When I entered, she was casually cutting paper as students worked on an art project. My mouth fell open, and I thought back to someone my administrator had complained about the week before for getting his kids out late. "Hi! I think you had better get your kids downstairs," I said.

"I know my responsibilities!" she yelled, causing all students' heads to snap up and look directly at us. I felt offended and embarrassed.

"O.K.," I said sheepishly. "I-ah-just came in to-ah-say that I will be in my-ah-room if you need any-ah-help." She glared at me, and I ducked out of her room.

I walked back to my room in a dazed state. "Perhaps I had embarrassed her since she was late," I thought. I decided to give her some time and then talk with her.

At our sign-out area, I ran into her that day. "I'd like to speak to you," she demanded in a tone that I try to avoid even with my students.

"O.K., Ms. F.," I said.

"We seem to have a problem here," she said.

"What's wrong, Ms. F.?" I asked.

"You and some others around here treat me like I don't know anything," she sneered. "I worked in the business world for 20 years before I came to teaching," she glared. "And you treat me like an idiot."

I apologized and shared that my intent had always been to help. I said that I understood too that the job could be quite overwhelming.

"I am not overwhelmed!" she balked.

I knew that this was not so. I taught next door to her, and I heard the yelling going on all day long. I had also been told by administration to work with her more because she was beginning to develop a mean rather than a stern rapport with her students. Yet I didn't want to hurt or embarrass her or rile her any further. I said that I would try to be a better listener and be there for her in a better way. I worried that she would use me as her scapegoat for her own frustrations and fears.

I had discovered that virtually no one enters a new job, especially one as demanding as teaching, without some fears, reservations and a need for help. I felt bad that I had alienated her. Even though she had been rude, I felt for her and more than ever wanted to help. I knew that I would have to figure out a better approach. I also thought long and hard about what she had said, deciding to look more critically at my professional and personal skills. I vowed to do a better job.

Well, each time Ms. F. and I have worked together since that episode, she has been cold and only tolerates my input. I have asked her if she would like to work with the other mentor. She has stated that she would not.

And so we continue to struggle. It is very emotionally frustrating and painful to be with her. I have decided to send others to help her whenever possible. She does not know that the help is coming from me, but that's O.K. She needs it and would probably not accept it from me anyway. I will hang in there and remain positive and optimistic, yet I am not used to people rejecting me either personally or professionally. Unfortunately, there is no happy ending to this story.

The Real Breakthrough

Norma had always been so nice and "agreeable" whenever I visited or offered assistance. However, I kept getting the feeling I was only being tolerated or regarded as a nuisance. I decided to give her some space and wait for something to develop.

The real breakthrough came when we both went off campus. The principal suggested we get together during our vacation to work on curriculum or whatever we deemed necessary. We agreed to spend a day at the curriculum lab making center materials. I had things I wanted to make for my class but I decided to devote the day to her. She didn't quite know what she wanted so I made a few suggestions which she took cautiously.

We spent the entire day working and talking. We got to know each other better, and I felt she really started to trust me. We talked shop as well as personal things. I shared my fears and failures as well as successes with her. She thanked me several times for helping her and being a friend. For the first time, I felt she was really sincere.

Caught Off Guard

Liz left no doubt in my mind about her attitude. When I happily informed her that I would be her new mentor teacher, Liz heard tormentor, not mentor. I would be another tormentor to check up on her, to chide, to criticize.

"I don't need anything! I'll let you know if I need anything! Everything's fine!"

Everything was definitely not fine. Liz became that day not only a charge but a challenge. Over the next couple of weeks, I planned "impromptu" encounters and went out of my way to be visible and available. She was civil, but her firm, set lips, encased in that sad, unsmiling face, told me resistance was the name of the game.

Precious teaching time kept slipping away. None of the tactics that I tried could break the stalemate. I could conjure up only one more approach. The next Thursday afternoon, I walked slowly, deliberately from my classroom to Liz's. Since it was a hot and humid afternoon, she had taken her class outside under two large trees. Some students were on task, most were not. Liz's back was to me. A girl motioned my presence to her. She was startled and flustered. She tried to explain why she was out of the classroom and what the students were working on. All the while, a cross, questioning "Why are you here?" was written across her face.

We talked! She was not prepared for my answer to her unspoken "why"? "Liz, I just wanted to stop by and see if you can help me with something. You see, my first report on my mentoring is due, and I feel that I have failed you. I haven't been able to help you in any way. Can you suggest some ways I might be more approachable or helpful?"

I caught her totally off guard. She looked at me strangely. Then, her tight little lips relaxed and the words tumbled out on top of one another. Her first semester mentor had been insensitive and harsh, she thought. The principal seemed not to like her. Everyone was down on beginners, on her, just waiting for her to make a mistake.

The stalemate was broken. A fresh, cool, breeze swept over us as we stood there. It felt good. We planned to meet third period the following day. Liz left no doubt about her attitude in my mind.

Reluctant to Ask

Bob S., a second-year probationary teacher, was assigned to me as a mentee for the year. I felt this would be a really pleasant assignment since I already knew Bob and could not foresee any problems in dealing with him.

I went to Bob's room to let him know that I would be working with him during the year. I felt that I was very nonthreatening in my approach, letting him know that I knew he had already been in the school for a year and that I was simply there for him if he needed me.

Bob's attitude was a surprise. "I don't need a mentor. I've been getting along fine all this time. So why do I need someone to watch over me suddenly?"

I thought of the many times I had felt insecure with the thought that someone was "watching over" me. And I really did understand exactly how Bob felt.

"Listen, I don't have any desire to watch over you," I said. "That's not what the mentor program is all about. I just meant that if there is anything you need, or anything you might need help with, you can let me know, and I'll be glad to help. I'd be glad to help if I weren't a mentor, so my position has very little to do with my willingness to help."

Bob's attitude softened a little then, and he apologized for being so brusque. But he never came to me for anything, and I found myself reluctant to ask him if he wanted anything. Then some time later we were having lunch in the cafeteria. Bob was talking about a lesson he was planning for the end of the year, about two months away. I listened, and though I had some suggestions that I thought were very good ones, I again felt hesitant to discuss them with someone who did not want my help.

Finally, I decided to simply deliver some printed information directly related to the project he was working on, without telling him it was from me. I put the information in his mailbox, and I didn't sign it or tell him where it came from. The next day, Bob came to me and asked me if I had put the material in his mailbox. "Well, yes," I admitted, "but you don't have to use it. I just thought it was interesting and that it fit in with what you were talking about at lunch the other day."

Bob was more than appreciative. He asked my advice on some aspects of the project he was working on. When we finished talking about it, he said, "You know, this kind of stuff should go on more often. This really is how teachers should work together."

Well, I agree. I wish I had thought of a way to get to him sooner.

Surprised

Janice is a first-year probationary teacher for third graders at an inner-city elementary school of 2,500 students of various ethnicities. The composition of the school is mostly Hispanic with about one-third Korean, Vietnamese and other Asian backgrounds. I am a fourth-grade teacher. As a mentor, I have been working with Janice since the beginning of the school year, now about ten months. We see each other usually once a day with more meaningful contact (conference, observation, staff development) about every other week.

At the beginning of the school year, I met with Janice and all of the other 18 first year teachers to orient them and offer my services as one of their two mentors. From the outset, Janice was quite interested in my help. She came to me often with questions and ideas and basically kept me informed about her room and her progress. She had had student teaching in college but was from out of state and was unfamiliar with the California system, to say nothing of our school with its inner-city ethnic potpourri.

At first, discipline was the biggest weakness in her program. She was quite frustrated at not being able to run a quiet classroom and very surprised that the children were not falling at her feet to learn. She was really having to put energy into disciplining them before she could teach content. This was making her feel very inadequate and unsuccessful. I was offering her ideas on different control and management techniques based on her performance lining up her students on the playground. But aside from that she did not want me to come into her room. In fact, she was most insistent that neither I nor the other mentor needed to come in for any reason. She always had an excuse why we couldn't or wouldn't want to. She continued to solicit our ideas and help, however. After about eight weeks she reported that things were settling down and that she felt really able to teach now.

During this time I did not push an entrance, but would stand outside the door and peer in while talking to her briefly. Or I would meet with her on neutral ground in the cafeteria or the office. I took her on a field trip to the Teacher Center once and released her from class several times to observe control techniques in other classrooms. I had her come into my room to observe management and control as well as some language lessons. We continued to meet about once a week either in conferences, staff development meetings or for casual chatting. I offered many suggestions in response to her questions. They were always received positively. In fact she began to refer to me as "my mentor teacher" to the other teachers. She also began to tell me what a great job she felt I was doing. That always felt good to hear. But she still didn't feel comfortable with anyone coming into her room.

I was able to observe a lot of progress in her control lining her students up outside and was positive that this was reflective of the classroom discipline. Then one day around Halloween as I was exiting the adjoining room, Janice came bouncing to her door and called after me to come over if I had time. She said that she had an art lesson in progress and wondered if I would be able to give her some feedback on it. Needless to say, I was very surprised but jumped at the chance. She said that administrators had been in her room before but had not given meaningful feedback. Finally she was ready to have me come in.

Since then, Janice has been almost eager to have me come by. She is still very receptive to the help I give her, though she needs less and less. She has offered to do lessons for other teachers in art and ESL and has even had a couple of new teachers come in to observe her. I have plans to do some video taping next year and she has been one of the first to volunteer to do lessons. Meanwhile, I continue to offer support. She has truly been a joy to work with.

Reaction*

The fear some mentees experience when observed is very strong. Knowing someone is actually watching you do your job puts a level of stress on teachers that is hard to imagine. The sensitivity shown by both the writer and the other mentor in allowing this new teacher the space she needed was excellent.

The mentor's being there when needed but low key in the formal observations enabled Janice to grow enough to let other adults see her work. In fact, the "easy" approach to classroom observation let Janice make the overture when she was ready. Finding all the clever ways to observe the mentee was outstanding and nonthreatening throughout the growth period and resulted in a successful level of confidence for Janice.

* For some cases, mentor teachers wrote reactions to a colleague's vignette.

Never Got a Chance

I had an occasion to mentor, or try to mentor, Gayle, a brand new teacher with the Los Angeles Unified School District. Gayle's previous experiences had been as a Deputy Sheriff in Los Angeles and as a teacher with preschool children. Gayle joined our staff in September as a sixth-grade teacher. She appeared very confident. She said that she neither wanted nor needed help in setting up her classroom or in developing curriculum units because of her previous experience.

As soon as I became aware that I would be Gayle's mentor teacher, I introduced myself as a friend and mentor and stated that I would like to observe her to see if there might be something I could do to help her get started. Gayle stated right away that there was nothing I could do.

About two weeks later my attention again focused on Gayle when she asked a question at a faculty meeting, "What does ESL mean?" Gayle also told about new techniques she was using in her class. The techniques were well tried for a thousand years. Therefore, after the meeting, I was very anxious to see her. I insisted on seeing her. I stated that I would like to see some of the wonderful things she had mentioned. Gayle firmly stated that she did not want a visit at that time because of a play they were working on and because of time conflicts.

I scheduled to see her anyway. She was absent that day, so I did not see her. Because of my schedule at other schools, I did not see her again until my principal asked if I would give her some help with her room environment and bulletin boards. I happily agreed. My principal mentioned that it was not going to be easy and said, "It's like walking on eggshells."

I again conferenced with Gayle in the cafeteria about visiting her room. She was very rude at this point. Unfortunately, I never saw Gayle in her classroom, even though I used a variety of foot-in-the-door techniques.

At our monthly mentor meeting, a new mentor teacher had been added to our school, and Gayle was put on her roster. At my last conference with Gayle's new mentor teacher, she told me that she was having the same problem that I had had with Gayle. "Can I see you?" "No, you cannot!"

Discussion Questions

The First Meeting

This vignette describes how one mentor teacher arranged for her mentees to meet as a group for a day during which they agreed on a management system for service. How do you divide your time among your mentees?

How do you make decisions about whom to see and when?

If you were to meet with all of your mentees as a group, what, besides a management system, might you discuss in the meeting?

The Right Track

Why do you think that an "open-ended invitation to use me" might not result in requests for assistance?

Why did this mentor's second approach appear to have been more successful?

How do you get on the "right track" when you meet a mentee?

No Happy Ending

What was this mentor's faux pas when she saw that Ms. F. kept her students after school?

How would you have dealt with Ms. F.?

What strategies can you suggest for helping older, more experienced neophytes?

The Real Breakthrough

Why do you think that teachers are often suspicious when mentors offer assistance?

Why did the mentor say that the day working together at the curriculum lab was a breakthrough?

What are your techniques for establishing trust with other teachers?

Discussion Questions

Caught Off Guard

Do you think that Liz had grounds for initially refusing the mentor's offers of assistance?

What was Liz's mentor's tactic for breaking the stalemate in their relationship?

How would you feel if your help were rejected by a teacher? What would you do?

Reluctant to Ask

What was Bob's mentor's strategy for establishing credibility? Why did it work?

Mentors need opportunities to display what they know and how they can be helpful. What are some ways that you can demonstrate your expertise to teachers?

Surprised

What were Janice's mentor's strategies of mentoring?

What was the turning point in Janice's classroom that allowed her to concentrate on improving her teaching?

Why do you think that Janice suddenly asked her mentor to observe her lesson?

What might have happened if the mentor had insisted on coming in to observe?

Never Got a Chance

What was this mentor's strategy of establishing a working relationship with Gayle?

Would you have handled the situation differently?

What would you do if a teacher continued to refuse all offers of assistance?

INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATION

Planning

Everything is Fine

The two cases in this section highlight the importance of both formal and informal individual consultation outside the classroom. It is during these kinds of interactions that mentors can act as a sounding board, demonstrate their expertise, and create an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Often informal conversations about teaching and more formal consultations about specific pedagogical practices are needed before teachers are ready to be observed and coached by a colleague.

In the first case, "Planning," the mentor was able to help a neophyte understand the concept of unit planning. After one conference, the teacher was able to plan a unit herself.

The second case, "Everything is Fine," illustrates how important it is for a mentor and her colleague to establish ground rules for their relationship. In the vignette, the mentor makes several offers of assistance, but it seems to her that her colleague does not invest the same amount of energy. This kind of arrangement does not constitute a relationship. No shared agreements about problems to work on together were mentioned. According to this frustrated mentor, Sam was not interested in taking the time to plan and often acted irresponsibly. This may be correct. But the mentor also noted that Sam spent an hour at his desk after school during a workshop. What alternative explanations can be offered to account for Sam's behavior?

Planning

One of my early successes was with a teacher who had absolutely no idea how to plan lessons around a particular unit. There was no continuity in the skills she was teaching. All of her lessons were extremely creative, yet they had no relation to the lessons before or after. They were just a hodgepodge of activities.

I sat down with her with several textbooks available at her school and her instructional guide, and proceeded to show her how to plan a unit around a list of objectives. I will never forget the look on her face when we had finished. It was as if I had shown her the most marvelous thing in the world. She admitted that she was glad that she no longer had to spend hours each evening preparing new lessons. She could see now how everything would simply flow together.

You can imagine how good I felt when this teacher put together the plan for the next unit completely by herself!

Everything Is Fine

One of my assignments as a mentor teacher was to work with a person who had just started teaching as a substitute in December and had become a full-time teacher in the spring. Sam had some experience with computers and some student teaching experience in a computer magnet school. Because of this experience and his eagerness to teach computers, he was given three computer sections and two basic ESL math classes.

I was assigned to be his buddy and later his mentor teacher. During the first day of school, a pupil-free day, we spent hours going over the textbooks and materials to be covered in class with a schedule of things to do each day. I saw him later in the afternoon and asked him to try to make plans for the following week, and he said, "I do not know what to do; I have never done this before." So we sat down and worked together writing each activity as we talked about each day's lesson. We got through the first week, struggling through opening bulletins, new students and their programs, textbook procedures, roll book, attendance and so forth. Most of the first week was spent with introductory activities in the use and function of a computer.

The second week was a little harder because some lecturing had to take place. As I continued working with Sam, I found out that all he wanted was to receive all the lesson plans and activities I was using with my students without taking the time to do it himself. Most of the time he would say: "I do not have the time to do it. I guess I will just give them something to work on with the computers for the whole period." I tried to get him to prepare his lessons a week at a time, but it required at least half an hour each day, so I did not insist on it as much as in the beginning. He managed to survive for the first ten weeks. But as the class was repeated with another set of students, I thought he would be better prepared for the second time around. This was not the case. Sam looked for activities in my desk, xeroxed them and handed them to his students the next day without any sense of continuity or organization.

When I asked how he was doing, he always said that everything was fine since he was doing it for the second time. I really needed to take the time to observe him because I found the room in a mess. Computers were left on, loaded with games. Printers were left on and stripped.

Sam asked to obtain coverage for three of the classes because he wanted to go back and visit his master teacher and obtain copies of lessons used in a particular class. I agreed and we tried to set the day, but it was left in limbo. A couple of weeks ago, he again asked for this coverage. In response to my question about what he was going to do, he just said, "I need time off to take care of a traffic ticket because I cannot get an extension." I had to turn down his request and tried to help him in another way.

I have not been able to spend much time with Sam, but he leaves me notes almost every day. I should keep them and make a collection of them. Some of them read: "We are out of paper. Please get some." "Use machine at your own risk. I do not know what is wrong with it." "Please do not use the box on desk." "I let the students take the books. I did not know you were using them." "Why are these teachers in my room?" (There was a teacher workshop in the computer room after school. He stayed there for the first hour using the desk and working in front of the classroom as the workshop was in progress.)

I find that some teachers are weak and need a lot of help. Some are not interested or do not want to spend the time needed to get organized and plan ahead. They want to get by with the minimum amount of work needed to survive in this job, and they always have excuses for not completing their tasks.

Discussion Questions

Planning

How did this mentor demonstrate the importance of unit planning?

In addition to curriculum guides and textbooks, what kinds of resources could you suggest to enrich a unit?

How do the different subject areas influence the content of unit plans?

Everything is Fine

What would you do if you encountered a teacher like Sam who made what you considered inappropriate requests?

How might establishing ground rules lead to a more constructive relationship?

The mentor suggested that Sam was lazy and did not want to take the time to plan. What alternative explanations can you offer for Sam's behavior?

What ground rules do you establish with your colleagues?

OBSERVATION AND COACHING

Really, I Did That?

A Key to Mentoring

The Moat

Mutual Benefit

Be Prepared: the Problem May Be Bigger than You think

Defensive

Caught In The Middle

The cases in this section describe classroom observation and coaching. This is the part of mentoring that has the greatest potential of getting close to the actual work of teaching. The coaching process necessarily begins with something to coach — a shared agreement about some knowledge, skill or practice that mentors and their colleagues decide to work on together.

What makes observation and coaching work depends on a number of conditions. The first is sufficient opportunity and time to observe and talk about what you have observed. A written record of the observation that is convincing enough to the teacher and makes her teaching and methods public can provide the basis for talking about the lesson.

It is often appropriate for mentors to make suggestions about how to improve teaching. This is particularly important if a teacher is having difficulty. But real learning only occurs when teachers participate in a reflective analysis of their lessons. Mentors must then help teachers adapt new knowledge to what they already know.

The first four cases, "Really, I Did That?," "A Key to Mentoring," "The Moat," and "Mutual Benefit" show the importance of shared agreements, appropriate feedback, and a convincing script of a classroom observation.

"Mutual Benefit" is the casebook's most extensive description of a coaching experience. The mentor helped Ms. R. with survival techniques during the first three weeks of the term, including arranging for visits to veteran teachers. When it was clear that the class was flowing, the mentor felt that Ms. R. was ready to address more significant concerns. The vignette describes several strategies the mentor used to coach Ms. R., including the use of different kinds of observation instruments. It is one of the few cases that hint at engaging a teacher in reflecting about her teaching.

The next two cases, "Be Prepared" and "Defensive" deal with teachers who had considerable difficulty during the class observed, and cried during the post-conference. How to respond constructively to a teacher's emotions was the topic of much discussion among mentors. It highlights the difficulty of the coaching task.

"Be Prepared" is a detailed story of a mentor who watched a neophyte obviously in trouble and who grappled with how to provide appropriate feedback. Though the mentor had taken voluminous notes, she realized that the teacher was in no position to integrate all of the information. Her strategy was to provide companionship and assurance and to identify a few suggestions to maintain order in her classroom. The teacher said that she would try the suggestions. Several mentors reacted to this vignette. One recommended some organizational techniques that the teacher could use to get the class started more quickly.

"Defensive" deals with a similar situation, but the conference ended on a sour note. The mentor's strategy was to tell the teacher she needed to work on classroom control. The teacher became defensive, began to cry, and told the mentor that she did not understand primary classes. How could this mentor have handled the situation differently? Perhaps open-ended questioning might have encouraged the teacher to reflect on what happened and might have been more constructive.

The last case, "Caught in the Middle," illustrates a mentor's frustration when the teacher did not use the mentor's suggested discipline techniques. The mentor's strategy was to tell Norma that her reputation was at stake if she did not improve her classroom order. Several mentors reacted to this vignette. Some supported the mentor's tactics; others suggested alternative ways to deal with the situation.

Really, I Did That?

"What a reassuring visit," were my thoughts as I walked from the classroom. "She's a natural."

I had visited a very new teacher trainee for the first time. She had been assigned to me during my first week as a mentor teacher. A bit apprehensive of what I might find, I arranged through a pre-observation conference to visit Jane during her first period of class. We talked of her objectives and goals, the makeup of the class, and problems she might be having. Jane indicated she was worried about her ability, worried about the visit, and just plain worried. She worried she wasn't up to the task of teaching in general. She conveyed an obvious concern for her students during the conversation. She truly cared about their welfare.

As I sat in the back watching students arrive, I observed a warm, caring adult greet sleepy students for an 8:00 a.m. class.

Very quickly the students were on task, busy, questioning, and learning. Open discussion continued, the class shared a clear mutual respect for the teacher and each other. This atmosphere prevailed throughout the period.

The post-observation conference was a joy. It must be because of the isolation of teachers that they don't know how good they are. Jane is a fine new teacher; she even has the potential to be a truly excellent one as things become easier. Responses to praise included: "Really? I did that? I can't see myself so I'm not sure that what I do is good."

My feelings after the conference were joyful. To know that with assurance and guidance a good teacher will flourish and grow in confidence makes up for all the frustrations. Jane progressed from a worried teacher to one who welcomes a visit anytime with a confidence that shows.

A Key to Mentoring

The feedback process after an observation has been a key factor in my mentorship. I have made it a point to conference with my mentees on the day of an observation or, if impossible, the very next day. We usually use after-school time, when all the students are gone and quiet once again reigns supreme in the classroom. We talk leisurely about what the mentee and I experienced from the day's visit.

Some conferences have taken place immediately after the observation, if students have left the room for recess, lunch or some other reason. Usually that time slot is not as beneficial as after school because the teacher still seems to be geared up from the lesson.

On the other hand, when the mentee has had to wait for feedback for more than one day, for whatever reason, the mentee has sometimes forgotten various parts of the lesson, as I would have, had it not been for my notes. Therefore, I have found that after-school feedback sessions on the same day are an asset.

The issue of my notetaking during the lesson and using the notes during the feedback session has recently come under scrutiny by some of my mentor peers. Therefore, I'm reviewing this practice. Up until now, the feedback that I have been given by five out of my six mentees has been that my notes have been thorough and thought-provoking. My fear in not taking notes during the lesson has been that I wouldn't do as good a job in recalling the experience for my mentees. However, because I only focus on one major objective which my mentee and I have agreed upon before observation time, I could probably commit most pertinent information to memory. Other mentors' comments about their notes have certainly given me food for thought. I plan to survey my mentees again in the week ahead to get their feedback as to whether or not they would prefer me to take notes during their lesson.

Feedback is a two-way street, and my mentees have been very responsive with me. They have helped me with how I am doing and whether or not I am meeting their needs. Most of the input has been positive. When it has been negative, I have tried to be a good listener and adjust to their suggestions, whenever possible and appropriate.

Conference time has been a sharing time as well. Mentees have conveyed fears, frustrations, tears, successes, and lots of laughter to me. It has allowed me to get to know these special individuals personally as well as professionally.

Feedback sessions after an observation have become many things to my mentees and me this year. As we continue to dialogue, I am certain that we will grow as we all seek to be the best teachers and people that we can be.

The Moat

I was assigned to work as a mentor with three new teachers at another school site for five days only. I did not know them or have any background information at all. At my school site, I have invested a lot of time getting to know the mentees by chatting, socializing, and building a rapport before actually doing anything. I was afraid of not being well received and of not being successful. What could I do in five days?

With some trepidation, I began my first day. After introductions by the principal, I began by spending the entire day observing in the three rooms, chatting, asking questions, finding out needs, and making notes on what I perceived as problem areas. I did feel comfortable doing this. I also solicited from the teachers what they perceived to be their needs and problem areas. Each was very willing to share ideas with me on this. This felt better.

In Jim's room I noticed serious control problems, difficulties during lessons in getting the children's attention and monitoring activities and independent work. About midway through the first day, I couldn't help but make a suggestion or two about the arrangement of furniture, which I felt contributed greatly to this problem. There was a moat between the teacher and the class, and the students' desks were arranged in closed, wall-like formations around the back of the room.

I must not have handled this well because Jim countered immediately with resistance. "I've moved the desk four times already." "I've already tried that." "I've tried this, and it didn't work." His responses indicated that he didn't want any input here. So we discussed time on task, which we had agreed would be the focus of my observation, and went on to other areas of need.

Before leaving that day, I gave him the room plan I had made with no discussion other than what the symbols meant. He still wasn't at all interested in changing any furniture around. I promised to bring in some requested materials and see him the following day. I felt I had failed disastrously in communicating the importance of room arrangement in good classroom management.

The next day Jim and I worked on groupings, gathering materials for reading, ESL, and other needs. We also talked over lunch about some of the personal problems he was having, namely too much to do, too little time. No mention was made by either of us about room arrangement, but he was still having the same or even worse problems with control during his lessons and independent work time. Jim did begin noticing the time-off-task behavior of many of his students. I had not planned to return for three days and was a little worried about the follow-up to our discussions.

When I returned, however, I was astounded. Jim had rearranged the entire room according to the plan I had left. He had placed desks for center activities in the corners, brought the students closer to him and grouped them in a much more manageable way. He was bubbling over with excitement about the changed behavior of some of the students. He couldn't stop talking about what the children were doing, what plans he had for changing this and that, what else he wanted to work on, and how successful he felt for a change.

Mutual Benefit

I have worked with Ms. R., a new teacher with an emergency credential, since September. We are both English teachers teaching seventh through ninth grades at an inner-city junior high school. The student body is made up of black and Hispanic students. Our faculty has a high transiency rate.

Ms. R. had no prior teaching experience. She worked previously as a housewife, deciding to go into teaching after her divorce. Being a single parent as well as attending night school to work on her credential keeps her extremely busy.

Since September, Ms. R. and I have worked on various kinds of activities to help her become acclimated to the teaching profession. We meet, on the average, about twice a week. At the beginning of the school year, we worked mostly on lesson planning and classroom management. We made semester outlines and did preliminary needs assessments for each class. We worked out a set of classroom rules and discussed ways to handle certain discipline situations. I helped her set up a filing system and arrange her bulletin boards to reflect current instructional units. Arrangements were made for her to visit and observe other veteran teachers at our school. After each visit, Ms. R. seemed genuinely impressed with her observations and expressed eagerness to implement some of the things she had seen demonstrated.

Once the semester was well underway, Ms. R. and I began conferencing to discuss her concerns. She was especially concerned with the overwhelming paper load and with misbehaving students. I showed her ways to have students correct some papers in class and to develop alternate assignments to reduce her load. We talked informally on several occasions before I went in for formal observations. After each visit, I would leave Ms. R. a list of several good things that were observed, and maybe one or two suggestions about things I noticed that could be improved.

As the year progressed, I began using more formal observation instruments such as the At Task/On Task Chart, which measures which students are engaged in certain types of activities at given times during a class period. Another instrument I used was the Flanders Interaction Chart, which measures the kinds of interaction and responses between teacher and students. One of Ms. R.'s primary problems was in the area of discipline. After using some of the more formal observation instruments, Ms. R. and I would look at the findings and discuss ways to get more students involved in problem solving and keep them on task. Eventually, the discipline problems lessened. They didn't disappear, but there was great improvement.

Ms. R.'s strength lay in literature discussions. I was able to help her a great deal with finding appropriate stories and poems which fit her instructional units. I also helped her determine levels of ability and alternate ways of handling varying levels within classes.

Perhaps Ms. R. was the ideal mentee. She was always eager for assistance and very receptive to my suggestions. With each visit, there was visible evidence that she had acted upon one or more of my suggestions. For example, during one visit I noticed that there were two students who talked together most of the period. I suggested that she move one of them. The next time I came to visit, they were separated.

I am convinced that the interactions between Ms. R. and myself have helped us both immensely. In helping her, I found myself reflecting on my own classroom practices and striving for improvement. And for her, the comments I've received about how much I have helped her are proof that in our case the mentor-mentee relationship was beneficial.

Be Prepared: The Problem May Be Bigger Than You Think!

I am not yet a seasoned mentor, and Jane is not a young, new teacher. She is a second-year probationary teacher who came to our school from an unsuccessful year at a junior high. She is a tiny woman, quite shy and soft spoken, a recent immigrant from an Eastern European country. Her biggest problem seemed to be class management: how to keep the students in their seats and on task for a significant portion of class time. I was expected to help her solve the problem and show significant improvement.

My first observation began normally with a pre-observation conference in which she asked me to pay attention to behavior problems. The lesson would be concerned with basic math and seemed well planned. Jane seemed quite composed when she talked about the behavior problems she was experiencing and explained that the class I would visit was her worst problem.

I was a few minutes early in arriving for the observation. A short chat and the decision on where she wanted me to sit brought us close to the tardy bell. I was curious to note there were still only four students present. At the ringing of the bell none of the four were in their seats; there was confusion at both doors with students walking in, walking out, talking, and milling around. Jane was writing on the board. The confusion in the room seemingly went unnoticed. Two minutes after the bell she went to her desk and picked up the roll book. There were now about twenty students in the room but only three were in their seats. Jane began asking individuals to sit down. On two occasions students who had taken seats got up again, one to go to the pencil sharpener, the other to cross the room and speak to another student. Ten minutes into the period all the students were in their seats, but few were quiet or paying attention.

Over the noise of conversation Jane announced what the lesson was and proceeded to work a sample problem on the board. Very few students were even facing the board, let alone paying attention to what was written on it. After five minutes of explaining sample problems, she passed out a ditto problem sheet without explanation and proceeded to help individuals at their desks. Fewer than ten percent of the class was on task at a single time, and they were always the students in the immediate proximity of the teacher.

The class continued the remaining time in much the same pattern. The anecdotal record was difficult to write as there were so many things going on at the same time. Students came and went from the room many times. Rude remarks were constant. I had written seven pages when the bell rang and the class charged the door. Since lunch was next, and the situation seemed so out of control, I decided to attempt some debriefing right then.

We sat down together, and the only thing to come to my mind was to ask her about the class period. She replied that she wasn't very happy with it; she exclaimed, "What am I to do?" and burst into tears. I mentally tossed out the seven pages of anecdotal records and attempted to be personally supportive. Even though we got through the tears, and I helped her understand that she could overcome many of the problems she was having, I was not happy with the outcome. We set a date for the next day to go over my notes and went to lunch.

The next meeting was not emotionally charged but was strained. She seemed uncomfortable, and I struggled to identify one single thing which needed to be done to settle things down in class. We agreed that the beginning of the class must be more orderly, and she vowed to begin working on the tardy problem.

I am having many problems juggling personal empathy, collegiality and professional help in this case. I am prone to think I became too emotionally involved from the beginning. I certainly am concerned for my ego if I am unsuccessful and Jane loses her job.

Reaction

My immediate reaction to "Be Prepared" is "Yes, some problems may be bigger than you are." Jane has many management problems, some can be corrected, some probably cannot be changed. Recognizing our own limitations as mentors is just as important as recognizing Jane's. The need to help, the desire to do well, affects mentors strongly. However, realizing that mentors cannot solve all problems and cannot create teachers from raw clay is mandatory for mentor teachers.

The job of mentor must be one of helping, advising, being supportive, and guiding when we can. The role must not become, even in the mentor's deepest thoughts, one of solving all problems for all people. Some teachers will fail no matter what the mentor does, and they must be allowed to do so. Fear for one's ego if a teacher does not improve places a huge emotional burden on the mentor. Let Jane take the "baby steps." Guide her, but don't accept her emotional load as well. Her failure is not necessarily yours.

Reaction

My initial reaction to "Be Prepared" is that Jane is academically prepared but needs much guidance in working effectively with this particular group. The mentor has to help her; she has to put her personal feelings aside and get to the root of the problem. Jane needs strict guidelines to follow. A suggestion would be to provide those guidelines written in the form of "Techniques to Try." Jane might not find this threatening, and this could alleviate some of the mentor's feeling of betrayal. The following suggestions may be appropriate:

- *The tardy problem: The class should be made aware of the fact that the door will be locked immediately after the late bell. It would then be necessary for students to go to the office for an admittance slip.*
- *Disruptive behavior: Some of the problems might be eliminated if Jane has the work on the chalkboard prior to the students' arrival. She should never turn her back on that class to write on the blackboard.*
- *Resolving conflicts: The mentor has experience in resolving conflicts and reducing discipline problems. She should talk to the class regarding school and class rules. (She has a responsibility to all students in the school, not just the students in her class.) The mentor should make herself visible in that room as often as she can.*

There is nothing wrong in being emotionally or personally involved. Jane needs that kind of support as much as she needs professional expertise. However, if she fails, it is not the mentor's fault.

The problem is bigger than Jane. It takes an assertive person with a variety of experiences with students of different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds to effectively manage a situation like the one in Jane's room. Doing all she can do to help, her ego should stay intact. She has not failed.

Defensive

Diane is a kindergarten teacher in her first year of teaching. I observed Diane teach a reading lesson. I told her ahead of time that her lesson should be simple and that I didn't expect her to use the seven-step plan.

When I first walked into the room at the expected time, the room was screaming with noise. The aide was sitting at a table doing nothing. Diane was at the board trying to teach beginning sounds. I couldn't hear anything. All the commotion in the room disturbed my concentration terribly. Unable to take anymore, I left the room quickly. Ten minutes later, I tried to confer with Diane.

I tried to think of some positive things to say to Diane before lowering the boom. I told her how nice her bulletin board looked and how quietly one little boy sat at the back table practicing writing his name. Afterward, I asked Diane about the noise and about her aide not participating in any way.

Right away Diane became defensive. She told me the more noise in the room, the better for her because she felt the children were expressing verbally what they had learned. As far as the aide was concerned, I had observed at a time when it was her break. I told Diane that in order for the children to concentrate and be successful at a task, the room needed to be a lot quieter and that she needed to work on control.

Diane started to cry. She said I didn't understand her because I had no experience at the primary level.

I tried to be as positive as possible by telling Diane that I understood how she felt and that I'd be happy to assist in any way. She sobbed even harder and said she felt it would be best not to go on with our conference. I felt very confused about our conference. I also felt like a sixth grader pushing a kindergartner around. Under these circumstances, I too felt it best not to go on.

Caught in the Middle

I've been offering assistance to Norma for several weeks now. She is always very positive and seemingly appreciative. However, I'm beginning to wonder if she's genuine.

I've shared materials and strategies to which she has seemed receptive, but I haven't seen her put them into practice. The administrators asked me to help her with discipline techniques, particularly with lining up her students on the playground. I shared several strategies with her, but she wasn't able to follow through because I was approached again with the same request.

My solution to the problem was to be frank. I told her teachers are judged by the orderliness of their classes, regardless of their ability to teach and that I had been asked to help her with her problem. She seemed to try to improve only after she understood that her reputation was at stake.

I found this incident to be the most disagreeable part of my job. I felt caught in the middle, but I suppose it was worth it because the principal informed me that she has shown growth in this area.

Reaction

I've been very fortunate to have had many successful experiences in working with new teachers. It's difficult for me to evaluate a situation such as that described regarding Norma.

In spite of the principal's remarks, I think there are many more important areas to improve upon than a teacher's line. I find that a very picky item to be concerned with. New teachers have to hear about their positive achievements. Negative situations may have to be ignored initially just to gain the teacher's confidence.

Eventually concerns such as straight lines, fancy bulletin boards, and perfect registers will be worked out. I also think that it is important for the new teacher to come to her own conclusion that her line needs improving. A mentor teacher can lead her thinking in that direction, but the recognition and resolution should come from the new teacher. It may take longer to resolve, but I feel the solution is more long-lasting and internalized.

Reaction

I feel your approach was probably the best you could have taken. I think the solution was a good idea also. I have experienced a similar reaction with one of my mentees. She actually was a pool teacher who was assigned to my class for six weeks to apprentice. She was never able to control my class during lessons or in the line-up outside. When I left on mentor assignments, the whole program fell apart. We worked together on teaching strategies, discipline techniques, and methods of control. I modeled for her, pointed out my techniques, gave her as much help with lessons and planning as I knew how, and led her through my already established discipline system. Still, though she was most receptive, always friendly, and truly liked being in the class and working with me, she was unable to carry out any of the suggestions or make any of the plans work.

Nevertheless, she was given a fourth grade midyear. She has also been unable to control this class. All of the suggestions I've made and help I've given her have been to no avail. She soaks them up with smiles and gratitude but cannot carry them out.

I am going to try your solution of being frank. I don't know that anything will really be able to help her, but perhaps if I confront her with harsh reality and do not mask the truth, she will be able to take some action. Her problems are too bad, for she is a dear person and really loves children.

Reaction

I think that the way this situation was handled was fine. Norma is obviously concerned with the image she presents to her superiors and also with how well she does her job in general.

I think that in the future a good way to handle this teacher would be to give her one task at a time to complete, and when it is done well, make sure she knows she has succeeded by giving her the proper praise. Then move on to another area that she can address.

Discussion Questions

Really, I Did That?

What did the mentor accomplish during the pre-observation conference with Jane?

What kinds of things did the mentor notice during her observation of Jane?

Why was Jane more self-assured after hearing her mentor's feedback during the post-observation conference?

Why do you think that Jane now welcomes a visit anytime from her mentor?

A Key to Mentoring

What is the value of thorough notes of an observation?

How has the mentor improved her skills as a mentor teacher?

The mentor states that during the pre-observation conference she only focuses on objectives that are agreed upon. Why is this important?

The Moat

What tactics did the mentor use when she was first assigned to three new teachers?

Why did the mentor tend to blame herself when things apparently weren't going well with Jim?

What alternative explanations can be made to account for Jim's initial defensive behavior?

How did the mentor's room plan represent an apparent turning point in this mentor-colleague relationship?

Mutual Benefit

This vignette is the most detailed description of a mentor's assistance over a period of time. What were some of the tactics that this mentor used with Ms. R.?

What kind of feedback did the mentor give Ms. R. after the initial observations?

How did the various observation forms contribute to a joint analysis of Ms. R.'s classroom management?

How did the mentor benefit from helping Ms. R.?

Be Prepared: The Problem May Be Bigger Than You Think!

How would you react if a teacher cried during a conference?

What was the mentor's strategy during the feedback session?

What would you have done in this situation?

Defensive

What would you do if you observed chaos in a classroom?

Why do you think that Diane became defensive during the post-observation conference?

How was this mentor's strategy different from the mentor's tactic in "Be Prepared"?

Caught in the Middle

Three mentors reacted to this mentor's tactics with Norma. How would you have handled the situation?

How would you feel if you were caught in the middle between a principal's request and your own strong feelings about what is appropriate behavior?

What would you do if you were confronted with a similar situation?

MODELING

Successful Modeling

Back to the Drawing Board

Modeling is a kind of coaching strategy. By being shown how to teach a lesson, a teacher gains access to a new model of instruction. It is always important to discuss and analyze the lesson after the modeling has occurred, and help the teacher to adapt the technique to her own pedagogical practice.

Teachers gain access to models of instruction by watching a veteran teacher teach her own class. Occasionally, a teacher will ask a mentor to model instruction in the teacher's classroom. Though often useful, this strategy can have a detrimental effect if the teacher loses status with her own students as a result of the modeled technique. In the two cases presented here, the results were different for one mentor teacher who modeled a lesson for two different teachers.

Successful Modeling

C., my mentee, is never afraid to ask for help, always applies what she learns, is eager and enthusiastic in her teaching, is adored by her students and peers, and is blessed with a natural gift to do her job well. Therefore, when C. asked me to help her with her afternoon program, I readily agreed. She stated that her second graders had trouble sitting through the long afternoons, no matter what subject was being taught.

One prearranged day, I left my students with a substitute and went into C.'s room after lunch. She had just begun to teach a language lesson. As she skillfully introduced a concept, the drizzle of rain that had been plaguing us all day became a gush of water. The tap-tap-tapping was now bang-bang-banging.

C. raised her voice to be heard as the children shifted focus between her and the rear window where the whole weather story was being told. The rain got worse instead of better. Again C. raised her voice, this time pleading, "Children, please ignore the rain! It will stop any moment now!" With that, a clap of thunder made her a liar. More heads turned to the back to look out the window. I had the distinct feeling that Noah would be floating by at any second.

Finally, in wild-eyed desperation, C. turned to me and said, "What do I do now?"

I calmly replied, "May I show you?"

"Sure!" she said. "Please do!" With any other teacher, I probably wouldn't have stepped in so readily. However, the trust and respect that C. and I had developed for each other warranted it. I got up and said hello to my lovely friends and then proceeded to talk to the students about the rain. I sent a representative to the door to look outside for all of us to make sure that it was really raining. The child did his job and reported back that, "Yes, in fact, it was really raining." Then I had the students turn around and watch the rain for awhile. After that, I taught them a rain song. I persuaded them to copy a sentence off the chalkboard that had to do with their language lesson. I sang the song's chorus each time it came around. About half way through the lesson, I turned things back over to the grateful teacher. After that things went well.

At conference time that afternoon, the mentee thanked, lauded and praised me over and over again. She said that she had learned it was more important sometimes to "go with the flow" than resist it. She said that my example had been invaluable to her.

I smiled, realizing that it was only a variation on an old teaching adage that I had learned long ago. "When a bug crawls across the floor, it's the lesson!" And so it was that day along with the language lesson, the thunder, and the tap-tap-tapping of the rain.

Back to the Drawing Board

My first day observing one of my new mentees was filled with excitement and anticipation. I arrived at her class midmorning after my own class had been turned over to a sub who had arrived late. I walked into the mentee's classroom which was full of hustle and bustle. I took it all in, making mental notes of what to say to her at that afternoon's conference, hoping to use praise generously as well as make suggestions carefully.

About 20 minutes into my observation, D., my mentee, struggled to gain student attention. She yelled above the roar: "I am going to the lights to turn them out. Remember what that means, children. Get ready, everybody! Here I go! Get ready to stop talking! Here I go!" D. turned off the lights and little, if anything, happened.

When D. and I conferenced that afternoon, I asked her about the light system. She said that she wanted to use it to quiet her students down or to get them to change from one subject to another. I asked her if the students knew and understood what her objective was, and whether or not they had been instructed in how to use it. She said, "No," and asked me if I would explain it all to them. I agreed.

I officially met the students the next day. I did an introduction, explained background information on myself and then shared my purpose for coming, and a little bit about the mentor program. They quickly warmed to me. I then went into the light system, discussing its purpose and usage. We practiced several times. D. practiced with them too, and then I had to take my leave. I promised to return the next day to see how well they were doing with it.

Days three and four were cancelled by D. On day five, as I entered, I could see that things were not going well. Children were out of their seats, voices were at a roar, D. was yelling across the room for quiet. A tap dancing bear and a juggler would have made the scene complete. My heart went out to this new teacher because we've all been there!

I walked directly over to D. feeling that another interruption probably wouldn't make too much difference and suggested using the lights to end the chaos. She faltered and expressed concern over its effectiveness. I offered to model again and she agreed.

I walked over to the lights and turned them out. Many voices continued. I boomed in the dark, "The lights are out! All talking is to stop now!" Whether or not it was the strange or authoritative voice that got them quiet, I'll never know, but they stopped talking immediately. Lights came on, and I told them to be seated. We went back over the light procedure and its purpose. I asked D. to step in and practice it with them. I finally left when all faces were smiling and D. had color back in hers again. I gave myself a mental pat on the back.

Later that day, when I met with D. for a follow-up conference, I was smiling from ear to ear. "Barbara," her first words snapped, "I think we'll have to come up with a better plan. Every time you interrupt my kids, they seem to do fine, but right after you leave, they fall apart."

Back to the drawing board, I thought. I could tell that this was going to be a very long, challenging year.

Discussion Questions

Successful Modeling

Back to the Drawing Board

(These vignettes should be discussed as a pair.)

In these two vignettes, the same mentor demonstrated a lesson or discipline technique for two teachers, however the results were different. What were the circumstances under which the mentor took over for each teacher?

How do you account for the different results?

How would you have handled the situation for D.?

Under what circumstances is it constructive to model a lesson in another teacher's classroom?

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ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Apelman, M. (1986). Working with teachers: The advisory approach. In K. Zumwalt (ed.), *Improving teaching: 1986 ASCD yearbook*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

As a staff person for a university-sponsored teachers' center, Apelman presents an advisory approach for working with teachers. Advisors only provide assistance to teachers on request, and begin with their expressed needs for joint work. The success of advisory work depends on a relationship of mutual trust and respect that develops gradually as teachers and advisors work and learn together. Advisors can play a variety of roles. Among these are observing teachers and engaging them in reflective deliberation based on notes taken during the observation, arranging for visits to other classrooms, commenting on journal entries which encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching, and helping teachers to use curriculum guides to develop their own units.

Bang-Jensen, V. (1986). The view from next door: A look at peer "supervision." In K. Zumwalt (ed.), *Improving teaching: 1986 ASCD yearbook*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Bang-Jensen, a teacher and writing consultant for the Ithaca City School District, identified several factors that helped her make colleagueship an effective means of improving instruction. She had a reputation among her colleagues for being able to help them improve their writing instruction; her contribution was not seen as a contractual, supervisory obligation. The relationship was initiated by teachers who wished to improve their writing instruction. Finally, she became available for supervision due to daily release time and constant presence in the school building.

Bird, T., & Little, J. W. (1985). *From teacher to leader: Training and support for instructional leadership by teachers*. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development.

This essay describes the teacher-as-leader role and explores ways that district officials, principals and other teachers can support teacher-leaders.

Borko, H. (1986). Clinical teacher education: The induction years. In J. Hoffman and S. Edwards (eds.), *Reality and reform in clinical teacher education*. New York: Random House.

Borko explores teacher induction practices and programs that are consistent with the Research in Teacher Education (RITE) framework of clinical teacher education. The chapter describes some characteristics of beginning teachers and focuses on the importance of supporting these novices by experienced teachers during the induction years. Formal programs, such as California's Mentor Teacher Program, which include stipends, increased recognition and responsibility, and release time, have potential for providing appropriate support. Several alternative models for providing assistance and a curriculum for the delivery system according to the RITE framework are presented in detail.

Cook, G. (1986). *Teachers helping teachers: A training program in peer supervision*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association of Teacher Educators, Las Vegas.

A suggested list of concepts and assumptions inherent in the clinical supervision model is (1) a focus on the teacher's own goals; (2) the use of classroom data as a basis for analysis and discussion; (3) an inquiry or problem-solving approach including hypothesis generation and testing; (4) a commitment to a long-term program of growth and development, with a focus on teacher strengths; (5) an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust; and (6) awareness of the ultimate goal of improvement of student learning.

Goldhammer, R., Anderson, R. H., & Krajewski, R. (1980). *Clinical supervision: Special methods for the supervision of teachers*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

This book is one of the state-of-the-art texts on the clinical supervision of teachers. The authors suggest several strategies for establishing a climate within which supervision may take place. For example, an atmosphere of credibility can be created offering analysis supported by concrete evidence. Some of the goals of the supervision conference are to provide adult rewards and satisfaction,

to define and authenticate issues in teaching, to offer didactic help if appropriate, to train teachers in techniques for self-supervision, and to develop incentives for professional self-analysis.

Goldsbury, L. (1986). *Colleague consultation: Another case of fools rush in*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Goldsbury attempts to clarify the value of colleague consultation, whereby two professional associates who are interested in common work give advice to each other, as distinguished from peer supervision, which connotes a more authoritarian overseeing. Included in the description of consultation are both direct observation which yields a descriptive data base, and confidential collaborative assessments of the meaning of the data. Colleagueship includes reciprocal assessment; each participant learns from the other how to refine practice (i.e., teachers also help consultants evaluate and refine their own consultation). A model of colleague consultation is presented.

Griffin, G. A. (1986). Clinical teacher education. In J. Hoffman and S. Edwards (eds.), *Reality and reform in clinical teacher education*. New York: Random House.

This chapter suggests a framework for clinical teacher education programs that can be used with prospective teachers, beginning teachers, and career teachers. The Research in Teacher Education (RITE) framework is useful for examining programs that are based on a conception of teacher growth and improvement. Griffin proposes seven critical features. The program must be (1) sensitive to school and classroom context; (2) purposeful and articulated; (3) participatory and collaborative; (4) based on knowledge of theory and teacher craft, not on a set of prescriptions based on "findings"; (5) ongoing and systematic, not periodic; (6) developmental and attentive to career stages; and (7) analytic and reflective.

Little, J. W., Galagaran, P., & O'Neal, R. (1984). *Professional development roles and relationships: Principles and skills of "advising."* San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development.

Conferences between advisors and teachers based on classroom observations were videotaped and analyzed in one county. Six principles of face-to-face advising are discussed: common language, focus, hard evidence, interactions, predictability and reciprocity.

Showers, B. (1984). *Peer coaching and its effects on transfer of training*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Like teaching performances, leadership performances can be introduced through training and then mastered with continuing support. This support includes providing companionship and assurance; providing technical feedback on the use of practices; engaging teachers in a continuing analysis of the desired skills and methods so as to increase their facility, flexibility, and understanding; and adapting the practices and methods to the situations and curriculum which they face day to day.

All peer coaches in this study were full-time teachers released by project funds for classroom observations and conferences. Though several coaches expressed concern that their "superior" role with their peers would possibly have repercussions, all managed to overcome their anxieties during the coaching period. The teachers who worked with the coaches uniformly agreed that, despite early anxieties about classroom observations, all the coaches handled themselves professionally, in the fullest sense of the word. The experience proved to be beneficial for both peer coaches and teacher trainees.

Smyth, J. W. (1986). *Peer clinical supervision as "empowerment" versus "delivery of a service."* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Smyth argues that collegial supervision among teachers is a form for empowering teachers to reflect on their own practice. Inherent in the process is that teachers' thoughts and intuitions about their own teaching are valued and important, and that the issues teachers regard as important become the basis for collaborative dialogue. Empowerment is less a handing down of knowledge, which Smyth calls "delivery," and more of a partnership — a mutual sharing of ideas, intuitions, and experiences. Clinical supervision is only useful if it is imbued with a spirit of critical inquiry. Without this spirit, supervision can be used only to raise technical questions about classroom instruction.

Zumwalt, K. (1986). Working together to improve teaching. In K. Zumwalt (ed.), *Improving teaching: 1986 ASCD yearbook*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

This book offers a rich array of alternatives designed to facilitate the professional development of teachers. Eleven educators (researchers and practitioners) observed two teachers and responded to the following questions: What did they look for? What kind of initial feedback did they give to the teachers? What kind of discussion or reaction did they hope would ensue? How would they envision working with the teachers in the future?

Though the authors had different goals and approaches to observation, they all wanted to involve each teacher in self-analysis and reflection. Generally, they obtained the teacher's impressions of what happened, shared their observations, and tried to engage the teachers in an analysis of what happened. The authors seemed to share a commitment to self-generated professional growth, and viewed research findings as tools to help teachers develop their thinking and decisionmaking capabilities rather than as a prescription for correct behavior.

CHAPTER THREE
MENTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

- *Mentor-Principal Relationship*
- *Confidentiality/Evaluation*
- *Appropriate Match*
- *Close Contact and Continual Support*

In the last chapter, mentors' challenges, successes, concerns, and failures in working with other teachers were discussed. This chapter addresses how the mentor program affects administrators. The new mentor role in schools introduces a new relationship between principals and mentors. The lack of clearly defined boundaries between mentors and principals is reflected in these vignettes about mentor interactions with principals. Also in this chapter are vignettes that may help administrators determine specifically what mentors do and how they are assigned.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first deals with the mentor-principal relationship. The vignettes highlight the importance of negotiating ground rules for their respective responsibilities for beginning teachers. A series of vignettes follow which describe the dilemma of confidentiality — how to keep interactions with teachers private and avoid contributing to the teachers' evaluations. The third section concerns the importance of the match between mentors and teachers by content area and grade level, and its influence on the mentor's assistance. The last section deals with the importance of mentors' close contact and continual support for neophytes.

MENTOR-PRINCIPAL RELATIONSHIP

A Collegial Relationship

Feeling Like A True Professional

A Jeopardized Relationship

Resistance to Change

LAUSD versus U.S. Navy

Administrative Support

Mentor teachers in LAUSD are asked to provide support and leadership to beginning teachers, a task that has been traditionally delegated to principals. Thus principals and mentors are being called upon to negotiate a shared leadership arrangement, where each must respect the responsibilities of the other. Often this new arrangement may require that mentors and principals set ground rules with each other so that they clearly understand each other's domains.

What happens if mentors and principals do not negotiate some ground rules? What can happen if a principal goes beyond the boundaries of acceptable behavior and asks for confidential information? How can mentors prevent their colleagues from viewing them as an arm of the administration?

The vignettes in this section address these questions. The first two, "A Collegial Relationship" and "Feeling Like a True Professional," describe a positive relationship between a mentor and principal based on trust and mutual regard. Both of these mentors describe their principals as supportive of their work.

The next two vignettes describe principals who dampened their initially positive relations with mentors because of inappropriate requests. In the first case, "A Jeopardized Relationship," a principal asked the mentor to help an experienced teacher and to "put everything in writing." In the second case, "Resistance to Change," the principal asked the mentor to help a "20-year veteran," and wanted both of them to observe the teacher together. The mentor wanted to help this teacher, but was concerned about being viewed as an arm of the administration by other teachers.

"LAUSD versus U.S. Navy" addresses a somewhat different issue. It appears as if the mentor and principal never negotiated their respective responsibilities with new teachers, which led to some unfortunate circumstances for the mentor and teacher.

In the last vignette, "Administrative Support," the mentor praises the support of administrators but criticizes the principal for indiscriminately recommending unqualified teachers to apply for the mentor program "in a desire to make teachers feel good." The mentor maintains that the role ought to be reserved for master teachers, not for teachers who sorely need a mentor themselves.

A Collegial Relationship

The mentor-principal relationship is very important. My principal and I have a very good relationship. He is very supportive and lets me run my own program for the new teachers. I usually start out with a new teacher orientation in my room. It is a very informal situation. I set up demonstration lessons, classroom visitations, staff development and anything else I feel would help my mentees be successful.

I usually conference with my principal every other week to keep him abreast of what I am doing. He never asks me to give him any confidential information about my new teachers. Anything I ask him for regarding the new teachers, materials or other support I feel that the new teachers need, he tries his best to get for me.

When he hires a new teacher, he usually asks me to come into his office to meet the teacher. He usually tells teachers that if they listen to me and follow my suggestions, they will have no problems. He also tells them that if they have any problems to see him, not the other teachers on the staff.

Feeling Like a True Profes-sional

My principal believes in allowing teachers to participate in the development and design of instructional programs at my high school. The principal calls upon her mentor teachers to help with inservice for the entire staff. This outstanding educational leader supports mentor-sponsored multicultural fairs with money, transportation, and general encouragement. Mentors are able to purchase videotapes, posters, and teachers' time in order to upgrade their instructional programs. These materials are also shared with mentees and teachers new to the high school.

This principal goes out of her way to publicize the mentors' special projects and major accomplishments. The principal's bulletin board is usually covered with letters of congratulations to mentor teachers. When I work with this principal, I feel like a true professional, and I feel that my work is truly appreciated and highly valued.

A Jeopardized Relationship

Mrs. Brown is a competent leader who supports the mentor program. She views it as a step in the right direction. With this stepping stone are many jobs and extra responsibilities. I share my expertise by participating in all extracurricular activities: leading staff development meetings, evaluating materials, coordinating special programs and projects, developing materials, and helping in all situations. There is mutual rapport and respect. Mrs. Brown is pleased because I am flexible and motivated.

Recently, a permanent teacher was having trouble with her reading program. I was told that all else had failed, and I was to go in and observe, demonstrate, suggest and save. There needed to be a change.

This ten-year teacher resisted the idea. She was angry, hostile and did not want me in her room.

I was told by my administrator to put everything — all acts and words — in writing. The teacher was told that I would be in her room. I felt very uncomfortable doing this and decided to discuss my feelings. This discussion put a damper on a wonderful relationship.

I am now often treated like my peers. This doesn't bother me, but I would like to be of greater assistance to this teacher. I would like to be the one that effects the change. However, the situation at present is not likely to boost my ego.

Resistance to Change

My job as a mentor teacher is to work with a probationary teacher in his second year. This teacher has the reputation of using any kind of audiovisual materials to entertain the students in his general science classes. He usually comes in during his conference period, which is at 8:00 a.m., and looks for materials to show to his students that day. He has taken some of the chemistry filmstrips that we just received for preview, indicating that he will preview them and give us some feedback. Most of these were not related to the topic he was covering that week.

I set up a conference with him, and we planned a whole unit for two weeks. We planned a daily activity schedule including lecture material, guided group practices, and individual work. I obtained other materials to supplement the book and xeroxed them for him to use in his classes. I took the time to organize him, and we prepared laboratory activities for each week. I went to observe him during the first week but he was out the two days I tried to observe. I felt that since I had given him advance notice, he was apprehensive about it. So the following week, I just showed up in class.

He had the objectives written on the board and had planned lectures and activities that broke the monotony. The students were actively engaged in the class work. Some of them were doing something else, but overall the class was more involved than before.

The teacher was happy that some changes had taken place and was eager to introduce other activities to supplement the lectures and the book. He was very pleased that he could apply this knowledge to things that were happening in the world, such as the nuclear plant meltdown.

After this success, the dean had talked to me about him and wanted me to work with him until she could see a change. She has not talked about him, but now she has given me the task of working with a 20-year veteran who is resistant to change.

She wants him to do laboratory activities with his general science classes. His excuse not to do it is that he is in the bungalow and has no access to equipment or materials, and it would take a long time to bring them in and set them up. He is a person that is in school from 8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., is in the cafeteria during his conference period and during every break, and does not take any work home. The dean wants us to go in together and observe him; I indicated that I would try to see him this week.

I do not feel, however, that I should go in with the dean to observe him. I am concerned that I will be viewed as part of the administration and not part of the mentor program. I feel that the assignment is fine, and I can work with him as I do with other new teachers. I do not need an administrator to tell me what to do, especially in front of another teacher.

Reaction

I can relate to your experience with the dean who asked you to work with someone and then did not acknowledge any positive progress you had made with the teacher. The principal I had last year did this all the time. She told me everything she wanted me to do (to the letter), but never responded to any results.

The other request of having you go in with the dean is even more subversive. How dare this dean ask you to back her up in her evaluative capacity and have you share the negative aspects of an observation by the administration! It would destroy your working relationship with teachers.

My past principal might have done this also, though I never had a chance to find out. She was transferred. The principal I work for now is great. She never mixes mentor tasks with administrative ones and never asks for evaluations.

LAUSD versus U.S. Navy

Jason knew how to keep a roll book; at least he should have. I had explained the importance of accurate records, shown him the correct symbols to use, and provided him with a mimeographed form for his reference. Because of the attention paid to all of our new teachers, he probably would have coped with his first few weeks of teaching if it hadn't been for the navy! I had never considered that as a mentor I would have to contend with the influence of the military after all these many years.

Jason was still a commissioned officer in the U.S. Navy when he was hired as an emergency provisional teacher. After five years as a hospital corpsman and three years as an officer, I assumed that Jason would have a firm grasp on handling records and responsibility. So much for assumptions!

In order to satisfy the navy, Jason was required to travel to San Diego Wednesday afternoons, spend the evening, and return to Los Angeles Thursday mornings to teach. His teaching effectiveness was on par with the other new teachers. In our conversations and observation time he appeared to be handling the paperwork adequately; and because he did not have questions or express concerns, I had no worries about him.

Just prior to the day ten-week report cards were due, the navy decided to act like the navy and demanded that he report back to his station prior to his separation. Emergency leave was arranged, and Jason turned in his roll book and keys to the assistant principal and left. I was not aware of this development until the day after he departed when, at 7:30 a.m., the principal met me and demanded, "What the hell is going on with Jason's roll book?" This was not a good way for me to begin the day! I certainly did not want to hear about Jason having only three grades per student, no attendance for the first six weeks and many students entered without a date. Since I could not tell the principal how a substitute was supposed to give midterm grades, I decided to ask the head counselor to show me the offending roll book. Again, I was subjected to, "I thought you were supposed to be helping him with things like this."

After a day of cursing the navy, school administrators, new teachers and myself, I was asked to meet with the principal again. I began to feel that I really wasn't all that hot a mentor. After a short period of feeling like a piece of the carpet, I pointed out that I was only remiss in double checking; and after all, the assistant principal had checked him out without looking at the roll book. And furthermore, I wasn't all that sure the principal had the right to be asking me questions about Jason in the first place. After the smoke settled to about chair level, the principal agreed that I wasn't such a bad guy and that poor Jason would catch it when he returned.

During the next week I conferred with the principal and head counselor to ascertain what they felt my role should be in assisting Jason upon his return. I was assured that all I needed to worry about was showing him how to correct his errors. This suited me fine since I didn't want to be any kind of a bad guy, and Jason certainly wouldn't need that from me anyhow.

The next week I overheard a student conversation about Jason. My ears tuned in to discover that he had returned — a day earlier! Swell, there was a meeting for new teachers the same afternoon. Back I went to the head counselor to find out what was going on. I was shown a two-page letter addressed to Jason detailing his problems and, in short, bawling him out. When I asked if he had received the letter, the answer was no. Since I was going to be interacting with him that afternoon, I was curious what my position should be. "Don't worry," I was told, "I'll see him before you do."

When Jason walked into the meeting he was reading a letter. When greeted, he mumbled that he would talk to me in a moment. To make a long story short, he had no meeting of any kind with the principal. The first inkling he had of a problem was when he found the letter in his box. It was left to me to explain the whole mess to him — just what a wet-behind-the-ears mentor needs to get into! Taking the bull by the horns, I decided that I had been elected principal and gently but firmly told him that he had to keep his roll book current each day. In the ensuing conversation, I discovered that the navy had been the extra straw on the camel's back. Basically, Jason had too many things to deal with and had really not been coping. He had all of the needed records; they were just on temporary roll sheets that he had never had the time to transfer to the official roll book. He was intensely frustrated by the lack of time to get all of the record keeping accomplished.

I informed the principal that Jason had been raked over the coals once by me and that further reprimand would probably be counterproductive. Since then, Jason and I have been able to communicate quite easily, and his roll book is a masterpiece. He only needed a little time without a lot of pressure coming from too many diverse places.

Administrative Support

The administration in my school is very supportive of the mentor program and its mentors. We have meetings once a week to discuss future plans and any problems we have. The assistant principal who supervises mentors always has his door open to us. This makes it very easy to do our jobs.

Though each person is assigned a specific mentee in the program, there is no possessiveness in this. If someone needs help, any mentor can give it. New teachers and mentors interact regularly.

I would say that the only negative attitude about the administration is that our principal, in a desire to make teachers feel good, often writes on their evaluations, "should try out for the mentor program." He has done that in some cases where the teacher needed a mentor. Nevertheless, these teachers fill out applications and go through the process of being observed to become a mentor. Other teachers in the school see this and begin to think that the mentor program is a bit of a joke.

I think that the principal in our school is not discriminating enough in the people he recommends for the program. I realize this may sound a little pompous, but I am truly sincere when I say that some of the applicants sorely need a mentor. For example, one woman who was selected as a mentor was never observed teaching her own classes since she was on vacation at the time when she was to be observed. This teacher has such poor classroom control that she yells all period, and the noise level in her classroom is deafening. I know — I teach next door to her. The major problem with this is that anyone observing her might think that this sort of classroom atmosphere is acceptable. I think the administrator's undiscriminating attitude is responsible for the placement of such a mentor.

However, there is a very positive attitude in our school towards mentors, also generated by the principal. Mentors are respected in our school, and they are all very active on campus.

Discussion Questions

A Collegial Relationship	Why is this mentor-principal relationship collegial? How does it compare with your relationship with your principal?	How do you feel about assisting principals with hiring new teachers?
Feeling Like a True Professional	Why does this mentor title the vignette "Feeling Like a True Professional"?	How does the principal demonstrate her support for the mentor program?
A Jeopardized Relationship	Why was the mentor uncomfortable about putting her observations in writing? Why do you think that a discussion about the mentor's discomfort put a damper on a wonderful relationship?	How would fulfilling the principal's request affect the mentor's relationship with this teacher? What would you do in this situation?
Resistance to Change	Describe a scenario of a mentor visiting a colleague with the dean.	What would you do if your principal made a similar request?
LAUSD versus U.S. Navy	How could this problem have been avoided? What kinds of ground rules could the mentor and principal have negotiated?	How do you plan to negotiate boundaries with your principal?
Administrative Support	How would you handle the principal's attitude in this vignette?	If you had to confront this principal, what tack would you use?

CONFIDENTIALITY/EVALUATION

Shattered

Kiss of Death

The line between talking about a colleague's work and evaluating her is a fine one. In California, the state regulations stipulate that mentor teachers are not allowed to evaluate their colleagues. To observe the law, one of the ground rules that has evolved is the "confidentiality rule": mentors agree not to talk to their principals about the teaching practices of any one teacher. All interactions between mentors and other teachers are strictly confidential.

The mentor-colleague relationship in LAUSD is grounded in the expectation that their interactions will be confidential. That expectation can contribute to an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust between mentors and their colleagues. How is the relationship affected if the trust is violated? The two vignettes presented here, "Shattered" and "Kiss of Death," describe how a mentor's relationship with a colleague was compromised when this happened.

Shattered

George was a first year teacher on an emergency credential. He was a music major and had no working experience with children. He began the school year as a kindergarten teacher. He was teamed up with another emergency credentialed teacher who also had never worked with children.

The year began very shakily for George. Both he and his room partner were having personality conflicts. In addition, neither one was able to share any expertise for professional growth. It was the blind leading the blind. George continued to have problems. Finally the principal transferred both teachers to other classrooms. George continued working in kindergarten, but continued to have problems with classroom management. I worked with George very closely, planning, observing, sharing materials, and demonstrating various lessons with him. The principal stulled [evaluated] George for the first time and gave him an unsatisfactory evaluation. She was very displeased with his work.

She called me to her office, and asked how he was progressing. I told her that that information was confidential; she apologized for asking. She knew George was scheduled to observe my class on a Tuesday and asked how long he observed. I told her that he did not show up for the observation. She was furious!

The next day she called us both into her office. She had written an objectionable memorandum to George. In this memorandum, she used my name in a way to prove his incompetency.

As you can probably imagine, I was shocked and disappointed. She had broken a confidence that I had built with my mentee. George's confidence was shattered to say the least. He asked me if I was working with him or against him. Problems escalated and I was eventually released from this assignment due to conflict of interest of the principal and new teacher.

Words cannot express how disappointed I was with how this principal dealt with this new teacher. Granted, George had problems and was working hard to improve his weaknesses; but the principal's treatment of this situation was highly insensitive and unprofessional.

Kiss of Death

One of the most difficult aspects of mentoring, at least at my school, is keeping that ever-so-important confidentiality between mentor and mentee. It is not only important to keep this relationship intact, but also to prevent other circumstances from damaging or diluting the rapport between the mentor and the mentee.

A small incident occurred with a new teacher at my school that dramatized this to me. For obvious reasons, I will refer to this new teacher by the pseudonym Tim.

I observed several of Tim's classes, followed by post-observation conferences and other informal chats. As usual I would first highlight the positive aspects of his teaching, briefly mentioning one or two suggestions he might work on to improve. During one of our post-observation chats, Tim mentioned he did not have enough time to properly prepare for his classes due to his new interest in working out in the gym during his conference period. I suggested that he might try some time management skills to make more efficient use of his time and reconsider the use of his conference period.

Several days later while I was meeting with a school administrator regarding mentor activities, he asked me to assist Tim in his lesson planning. Without any discussion, the administrator told me about Tim using his conference periods to work out.

During Tim's evaluation, an administrator expressed to him his concern about Tim's use of his conference period and mentioned that I as the mentor was aware of it. This was the kiss of death. Tim incorrectly inferred that I had related this information to the administrator instead of the other way around. Subsequently Tim did not avail himself of mentor time and stayed away from our new teacher meetings as well. After hearing about this through other new teachers, I met with Tim and explained the situation.

The result of this experience is that I now try to avoid having conversations or even listening to comments about new teachers from administrators. The level of rapport between mentee and mentor hinges on strong confidentiality.

Discussion Questions

Shattered

Why was George's relationship with his mentor compromised when he discovered that his mentor had talked with the principal?

How could this problem have been avoided?

What do you expect of a principal who has a teacher with problems on staff?

How do you differentiate your responsibilities from those of the principal?

Kiss of Death

What can be done to restore Tim's trust in his mentor?

What kinds of ground rules would you set with Tim's principal that might prevent a recurrence of this problem?

APPROPRIATE MATCH

Professional Buddies

Working Together

Expanding a Mentor's Resources

An Uphill Job

Utter Dismay

The successful induction of new teachers often depends on the availability of credible support from other teachers. To be credible is to have expertise in the subject area or grade level of the neophyte. For example, a master science teacher may be credible to a new science teacher whereas a master English teacher may not be. Likewise, a master primary teacher can be more credible to a new first-grade teacher than a fifth-grade teacher could be. There are exceptions: a fifth-grade teacher with past experience as a primary teacher could be a credible resource for a first-grade teacher.

Three vignettes in this section show the importance of demonstrating credibility in a common subject area. In the first two cases, "Professional Buddies" and "Working Together," the mentors were able to provide substantive assistance to their colleagues because they taught the same content area to similar students. In the third case, "Expanding a Mentor's Resources," the mentor was assigned 13 new teachers, of whom only three taught in her subject area. She was frustrated at not being able to help all the teachers, particularly those who taught different subjects. The mentor recruited an outstanding retired teacher who had taught two different subject areas. With the help of this teacher, the mentor was able to give more of her time to the science teachers whose subject area she taught.

The last two vignettes describe matches that may have been inappropriate. In the first case, "An Uphill Job," the teacher had seven years of experience and was described as an excellent teacher by the principal. When Ralph suggested that he did not need a mentor, the mentor insisted on carrying out her role. Two questions can be raised. Did this teacher need a mentor? If not, does the mentor have the authority to change her assignment? Several mentors reacted to this vignette.

The final vignette, "Utter Dismay," describes an insecure teacher assigned to first grade, a level she had never taught before. The mentor tried to help, but the teacher was absent for several appointments. The teacher resigned within six weeks. Several mentors reacted to this vignette.

Professional Buddies

I am currently working with a provisional teacher who teaches world history and U.S. history at Huntington Park High School. Jeff is creative, well organized and very knowledgeable in his subject areas. As a matter of fact, when I first introduced myself to Jeff as his new mentor teacher, I was concerned about offering him assistance because I knew he was a dedicated professional teacher.

As it turned out, Jeff did have one major area of concern. He did not know how to reach his ninth-grade world history students who had severe reading problems. Since I was working with similar students, I was able to explore motivational and reading problems with Jeff. We soon began to exchange lesson plans and world history reading materials especially designed to meet our ninth graders' needs. We both became more aware of our students' frustration levels and our own teaching behaviors. We observe each other whenever we use a new approach or special activity in our classes.

By working together, we are able to understand each other's strengths. Jeff, in particular, is a multimedia expert. He was a professional filmstrip designer, and he has developed many visual displays for the social studies department. Since we both teach world history, it seemed logical for us to pool our energies to create material for our low-reading-level world history classes. As a mentor teacher, I came up with the necessary money, time and equipment to develop several multimedia projects. Jeff contributed his concern, expertise, and energy. Jeff recently completed a video project plus graphics which provide vocabulary words and definitions as well as questions to enhance student comprehension of selected themes in the film *Amadeus*. Selected segments of this film are shown, immediately followed by questions on the screen which assess student comprehension of precise learning objectives. Jeff is currently using the videographic display writer to provide a visual vocabulary for world history. This includes the words and their definitions, as well as visual images for concepts such as pyramids, aqueducts, and so forth.

We also meet regularly, during nutrition break, lunch or our conference periods, to upgrade and share lesson plans. Recently, we started to experiment with "Social Studies Starters: Games Students Like to Play," created by John William Benson, a teacher from Garfield High School. These games enliven the classroom and create an exciting learning atmosphere for our students. We teach in adjoining classrooms, so we are able to see and hear each other experiment with teaching games and audiovisual materials.

Over the past four months Jeff and I have become professional buddies. We share ideas, jokes, learning theories, rooms, books, teaching strategies, and our real concern about effective teaching. I started out to help Jeff, but I ended up being his teammate.

Working Together

Before I started working with Mrs. Sergeant, she seemed to be a very strict teacher. It was her first year working with junior high school students. She had taught previously at a junior college. Mrs. Sergeant ran her room as though the students were in the army. They could not get up from their seats after they sat down. No one could talk. Normal working conversations were out of the question. All assignments were written, fill-in-the-space type. No work was corrected. Every Friday student notebooks were corrected by placing a check on top of the page. Students didn't know if the assignment completed that day was correct.

Since both of us taught English as a second language and were on the same track, we shared some students. To go to my room, I had to go by her room, and I noticed that she was often absent. Sometimes the students would tell me that she seemed like she was drunk and that she would wave the roll book in the air and scream "I got the power." They thought it was very funny. She seemed like she was about to have a nervous breakdown.

That was before I became a mentor and started working with her. She has come a long way in a year and a half! I'm very proud of her. She has become more relaxed. She is not absent as often. She has gotten a grasp of the material the students can do. Now she doesn't assign work that is over their heads. She's not so uptight. Her classroom is well decorated, and she seems to be a different person.

What exactly has made the difference, I don't know. It took about six months for her to trust me completely. I made sure to tell her that I was there to help her. And whenever she needed help, I'd focus on her problem. Together we would solve it. I told her that I was not there to evaluate her. I shared materials with her and spoke up for her with the ESL coordinator. I got materials for her, gave demonstration lessons, explained and re-explained whatever she needed help with.

I was very patient and encouraged her in all attempts to be a better teacher. I'm very proud. She still has to learn to speak up for herself since she is not yet permanent and doesn't want to rock the boat. She takes pride in her work. Her children are learning. The last evaluation was a great improvement over the one last year. She asked me to observe her and give her comments on how she could improve the lesson. I was like a beaming parent whose child received an excellent report, and I felt like telling the whole staff, "I helped her a little."

Expanding a Mentor's Resources

As a mentor teacher at Lincoln High School, my duties include servicing two trainees and eleven other new teachers, only three of whom are in science, my subject specialty. Most of my mentees are teaching social studies or English. I also assist other new teachers from various schools in the city. Needless to say, I am overextended and very often frustrated with the lack of time I am able to spend with my mentees. Like most other mentors, I do not allocate my time equally to all new teachers but try to assist those who have the greatest needs. Unfortunately this means giving little of my time to the strongest ones. I find my position more akin to that of a firefighter, trying to stop small problems before they get serious rather than dealing with the art of teaching. This is further complicated by the fact that I have four science classes and find it extremely difficult to leave these with a substitute so I can visit my mentees regularly.

Through the retired teacher program, I have found an excellent way to improve the effectiveness of mentoring at Lincoln. It was my good fortune to have recruited one of the most outstanding teachers I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. Twenty-five years ago when I was a student teacher, he was my master teacher at Lincoln High School, which also happens to be his alma mater. In no small way he was responsible for my success in teaching, and I still try to model myself after him. In the retired teacher program, he actively displays the same dedication and enthusiasm for the teaching profession that he did for the 30 years he taught social studies, English, and English as a second language at Lincoln High School.

Not only does he have the expertise in the subject fields I lack, but he also has the time to be with the new teachers when it is most critical. This also gives me an opportunity to give more of my time to the science mentees where I can be of greater assistance.

An Uphill Job

After several messages back and forth I finally made an appointment with Ralph. I arrived at his school 30 minutes before our meeting so I could introduce myself to the clerical staff and the office manager. The office manager told me, "The principal wants to meet you, but she is in a meeting right now so please wait." Well, I waited approximately 45 minutes, and I began to get antsy. So I asked how much longer it would be. She said, "just a few minutes more." Well, those minutes turned into one hour and 15 minutes! I was getting angry so I told the office manager I had other appointments that afternoon and requested that she convey that message to the principal. A few minutes later the principal came out and invited me into her office. By that time I had assumed my totally "professional" attitude with no hint of friendliness.

The principal apologized for the delay and asked me why I was there to see Ralph. She said he was an excellent teacher and thought the mentor program was only used upon request. Already angry, I explained the responsibilities of my assignment and told her if she had any more questions she could refer them to my supervisor. She wanted no part of that and mentioned she did have a new teacher she'd like me to work with. I explained that I was there today to see Ralph but that I would inform my supervisor that this school had a new teacher on staff and have her assign that teacher to the mentor program. I asked the principal whether she had any problem with me doing classroom observations. She told me it was totally up to the teacher. I thanked her and was on my way to meet Ralph.

When I arrived at Ralph's room he began to explain his class to me before inviting me in. After I pointed out that there was no need to explain at that stage, I finally made it past the door. I explained my position was one of a helper or co-worker. I gave him a brief history about my background and asked him about his. He told me he had taught an educationally handicapped class for the district for seven years, left and went to Palm Springs where he taught trainable mentally retarded students, and moved back here where he is currently teaching a learning handicapped class.

I asked Ralph whether he felt there were any areas where he needed help or any particular materials he needed and couldn't find. Of course he said no. I then asked to see specific things like lesson plans and how he handled behavior problems. He seemed very in control of his classroom. I suggested a visitation to another learning handicapped classroom, and he liked the idea. I told him I would set it up and be back next week. He told me he really didn't need a mentor and asked me what the requirements were for becoming a mentor. I explained. He told me he may apply for the position. I wished him good luck, we laughed, and I said, "I'll see you next week."

After leaving, I didn't really feel like I had reached Ralph. I sensed a bit of resentment towards me. I don't know if it was because I was a woman, or if it was because I was a black woman, but I knew this job was going to be all uphill.

Reaction

This commentary is important because it brings out significant problems in mentor/mentee relationships. First of all, when a mentor works with an experienced teacher from a school other than the mentor's home school, there may well be a lack of the rapport between the two teachers — a relationship vital to a productive meeting. Also, it has been my experience that when a mentor works with teachers in specialty fields like L.H., there is usually a feeling that the mentor has little substance to offer. Perhaps this is why this mentor felt resentment from Ralph. I don't think sex or ethnicity necessarily adds to the problems experienced by the mentor in this case. My last point is simple but important: I think there should be a screening process that matches mentors with mentees or new teachers on a "real needs" basis. If this screening had been done carefully, the type of problems found in this case could be avoided. The mentor should spend time only with teachers who have a clear and definable need.

It appears to me that some principals' random assignment process of their mentors is designed only to make sure mentors look good on the books as far as even distribution is concerned. The equation is something like this:

$$\frac{\text{Number of New or Provisional Teachers}}{\text{divided by Number of Mentors}} \text{ equals Number of New Teachers per Mentor.}$$

This may result in everybody "being covered," which is to say the mentors look like they have official responsibilities. However, this type of random selection leads to problems: resentment, frustration, or misunderstanding.

I think it would be better to selectively match each mentor with teachers who have real need of the mentor's special abilities. The mentor should be given more responsibilities in inservice training and curriculum work rather than be expected to visit teachers who cannot or will not benefit from the mentor's services.

Reaction

I feel that the whole experience this mentor went through in trying to help a mentee was a total disaster. Being a mentor myself, I know time is very important. When you have to wait one hour and 15 minutes to see a principal, that is time being wasted. I have found out that my time is very valuable and precious because I don't have enough time to do all the things I have to do.

I also got the impression that Ralph really didn't want any help.

Reaction

The Mentor Teacher Program is a very recent development in education and still lacks the understanding of many people involved in it. This lack of understanding affects the relationships and feelings of mentors, mentees, and administrators. In the case of Ralph, I can see some areas that need to be addressed in order to avoid such a negative experience.

In the first place, it is always important to make an appointment with the principal before a mentor begins working with a new teacher. Principals have firsthand information about the mentees. The information that regional offices give to mentors is usually secondhand, or the product of very short and sporadic visitations. Should this mentor have made an appointment with the principal and confirmed it before her arrival, she could have avoided the long 75-minute wait. She could also have had a broader scope of Ralph's background.

In the second place, it seems to me that Ralph was not well informed about the mentor program. The fact that he had previously taught for the district for seven years made him feel that perhaps he was not eligible to work with a mentor teacher. It is common knowledge that the mentor program is designed to assist primarily those teachers who have not had any formal training experience before they begin working for the district. According to the principal's and Ralph's comments, he did not need any help. However, according to the principal, there was another teacher who needed assistance. Maybe the regional office was unaware of such a situation.

Finally, it is my personal experience that it is always better to meet the new mentee when the mentee is free of students. An appointment before or after school to introduce yourself and to draft assessment needs is usually more effective than a visit to the classroom. Later on, after you sit down to perform a formal observation, you can pinpoint areas of improvement.

We need to become more aware of the fine points that make mentoring a more rewarding experience. These include (1) understanding human emotions and developing better professional attitudes among all the people involved in the program; (2) improving observation techniques; (3) criticizing and evaluating the performance of a mentee; and (4) establishing clear and consistent guidelines for matching mentors with new teachers. Such considerations will certainly improve the understanding and relationships of all of us who are trying very hard to make the mentor program successful.

Utter Dismay

I work in an inner-city school which is hard to staff. The ethnic makeup of the school is black and Hispanic. Sometimes discipline can be a problem.

When Denise entered the school for the first time, I was in the office. I introduced myself to her and we talked for a few minutes. The principal came into the office and introduced himself. I asked him about grade assignments because we had three new teachers arriving that day. He assigned her to a first-grade class. Denise smiled and said O.K. As we left the office to go upstairs to her room, Denise told me that she had never taught first grade before. At her old school she was a pool teacher and had taught third grade for six months. She seemed to be very insecure about the grade-level change as we talked.

When we entered the room, she looked around. I observed her face and could see utter dismay. I told her that this class had been set up the week before she arrived. I also told her that the reading teacher had been holding the class. I showed her around the room, and I explained some of the school's procedures. I went over the attendance cards and showed her where to pick up the children. I asked her if she had any questions. She said, "Not right now."

During the course of the day, I finished getting her supplies and material that would be needed to run her class.

I checked on her every morning the first week she was there. She seemed to be having problems with the class. Every day she would complain to me or the office about her room or her class. This went on for about three weeks. I set up appointments to work in the classroom with her, but when it was time for me to go into her room she was absent. I really got disgusted.

Around the sixth week of school, I finally got a chance to talk with her. I stopped her one day in the staff lounge and asked if there were any problems. She started telling me that she couldn't handle the children. I gave her some suggestions. She thanked me. The next day she was absent. She did not return after that. She called in about a week later and said that she was going to resign.

Reaction

Denise, as described in the article by one of our fellow mentors, does not exactly fit with any mentee that I am working with. Denise was someone who both avoided help and did not do well. I do have two mentees who have had extreme problems this year, yet both have actively sought out help from me and other resources. On the other hand, I have one mentee who has avoided help from me at all cost, but she is not intimidated by her class in the least. She too needs to improve, but has already conquered many of the obstacles new teachers face, such as lesson planning. This mentee really came to our field with these skills.

It must have been difficult for the author of "Utter Dismay" to watch Denise struggle so. I am a firm believer, however, that all people who want to teach are not necessarily meant to teach.

Reaction

It was unfortunate that Denise was not afforded the opportunity or luxury to work in a classroom along with a mentor. It was unfortunate to have her grade assignment changed to one uncomfortable for her. Had I been the mentor, I would have interceded for Denise. I would have gone to the principal immediately and explained that Denise had never taught first grade, was not comfortable with it, and asked if it would be possible to assign one of the other new teachers to the first grade. I would have further explained to the principal Denise's experience in third grade. I would have inquired if he had a third-grade assignment for Denise.

Discussion Questions

Professional Buddies

Why is this mentor particularly well matched with Jeff?

Why does this mentor describe his collaboration with Jeff as one of "professional buddies"?

What does Jeff gain from his work with the mentor? What does the mentor get from Jeff?

Working Together

Why was Mrs. Sergeant's mentor a credible model?

What are some of the strategies that you think the mentor used to help Mrs. Sergeant?

How would you help a teacher who demonstrated erratic behavior?

Expanding a Mentor's Resources

Why was this retired teacher particularly useful to the mentor?

How might you use the Retired Teacher Program?

What district resources can you use to facilitate your job?

An Uphill Job

Do you think that the mentor ought to have been assigned to Ralph? If yes, why? If no, what would you have done in the situation?

Why was the mentor angry with the principal? How could the mentor avoid problems like this in the future?

What are your responsibilities to a principal when you visit teachers in that school?

Utter Dismay

How would you have helped Denise?

Do you think that the mentor could have prevented Denise from resigning?

Close Contact and Continual Support

A Mentor's Fairy Tale

From Soup to Nuts

The final section deals with the importance of frequent contacts and continual support for new teachers. The two vignettes presented here show the influence of proximal support on the professional development of neophytes.

Lisa, in "A Mentor's Fairy Tale," had the luxury of working in her mentor teacher's classroom for three weeks before taking over her own classroom. The mentor continued to provide on-site support for Lisa throughout the semester. This vignette provides an excellent example of how close contact and a lot of support can help a new teacher gain a sense of self-sufficiency to become a real professional.

In the second case, "From Soup to Nuts," the middle-aged teacher, who had clearly just made a career change, did not even know the logistics of how to accomplish a teaching task. Were it not for the on-site availability of a mentor teacher to show him the ropes, this new teacher could have been bogged down before he began the actual tasks of teaching.

A Mentor's Fairy Tale

Lisa is a very pleasant young lady. She came to our school with some experience in teaching, having taught at a Catholic school for a year before coming into our school system. She was very eager to learn.

My principal assigned her to me on the first day of school. She worked very closely with me helping me to set up my reading, math and spelling groups. I shared the responsibility of running the room with her. This made her really feel like a part of the room.

Lisa stayed with me about three weeks. She had won the respect of the children by this time and it made things a lot easier for her. In my school this is very important.

When the time came for the principal to assign her to a classroom, I felt that she was truly ready. She chose a second-grade class. She was very excited about that because she wanted to teach second or third grade.

When she was assigned a room, I went in and helped her set it up. She took great pride in what she was doing. Her room was very attractively decorated. It was filled with pictures and learning activities. She told me that she had been collecting materials ever since she was in college. She had a nice collection to start with.

On the first Monday of the fourth week of school she received her children. I went in for the first hour to help. I pretended to be filling out some papers. She brought the children up to the room. She gave them a nice little pep talk and laid out her rules and regulations. The children sat very quietly while she was talking. When she finished, she asked them if they had any questions. Some of the children raised their hands and asked a question or two. The answers she gave seemed to satisfy them.

I kept a close check on her. Every morning I would pop in to see if there was anything I could do to help her. If there was something that she didn't understand, I would try to clear it up for her.

She was very receptive to new ideas and accepted them very graciously. She was a person who would follow through on ideas and suggestions. When I set up demonstrations, she would always go and come back with lots of questions.

By the end of the first semester she was doing a beautiful job. She felt at ease and just seemed to fit in with the school's routine. I was very pleased and proud of her. When the principal observed her, she received an outstanding evaluation. She was truly a great person to work with and really made mentoring worthwhile.

Reaction

Lisa's story does indeed sound very much like a mentor's fairy tale. If I didn't know this particular mentor, that's just what I would have believed. Everything went so well that most mentors would be green with envy, including me. The truth of the matter is that an experienced master teacher did all the right things at the right time to assist a young mentee blossom.

An eager young mentee with some previous experience assigned to a master mentor began this success story. Sharing a room with the mentor before she started her own room did much to instill a feeling of security in the young teacher. The three weeks she spent working with her mentor and especially the fact she was able to win the respect of the children were crucial elements in building the confidence Lisa needed to start her own class.

In my own situation, most of my mentees were introduced to me the day before they started their five classes. There needs to be time for the mentor and mentee to work together before the new teacher is thrown in front of his classes for the first time. The mentor and mentee should learn about each other and establish a strong rapport so they can communicate and work together.

Keeping in contact with the mentee by the mentor was a crucial aspect of this story. The pride felt by the mentor for the success of the young teacher was another indication of the commitment demonstrated by this extraordinary mentor teacher. My hat is off to this mentor.

From Soup to Nuts

Manuel is a brand new teacher. Before he joined the profession he was a soldier, a salesman, and an insurance consultant. At 40, he has chosen teaching for a career.

We met today at the office. After a short introduction, we walked to his room. There was a substitute teacher there. He was not supposed to start today, but he was going to stay anyhow because he wants to be ready for the big day tomorrow!

I took him and showed him around: The bookroom, the workroom, the retrieval room, the library, the teacher's cafeteria, and so forth.

"By the way, did you sign in today?" I casually asked.

"Sign in? What do you mean? Where am I supposed to sign in?"

"Oh, you don't have to sign in and out today, but I'll show you where and when to do it."

We talked about everything, from checking his mailbox every morning, to signing up for lunch if he plans to eat in the cafeteria.

From the informal conversation, I deduced that he needed to learn every trick of the profession. After lunch we went back to the room to observe the routine and to become better acquainted with the children.

"Mrs. Johnston, I have some handwriting worksheets that I would like to use with the children. Who can make me some copies?"

"Oh, all you have to do is to make a thermofax and run the copies yourself," I explained.

"A thermofax? What is a thermofax?"

Discussion Questions

A Mentor's Fairy Tale

What are the merits of assigning a teacher to a mentor's class for a three-week induction period?

Why are close contact and continual support for a teacher important during the first year?

Describe your strategies for assisting new teachers.

From Soup to Nuts

What would you include in a care package for your new teachers to familiarize them with their school?

What are some characteristics of older teachers who are going through a career change?

How are they different from teachers fresh out of college?

How might you adjust your mentoring strategies to help these teachers?

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Borko explores teacher induction practices and programs that are consistent with the Research in Teacher Education (RITE) framework of clinical teacher education. The chapter describes some characteristics of beginning teachers and focuses on the importance of support for these novices by experienced teachers during the induction years. Formal programs, such as California's Mentor Teacher Program, which accompany stipends, increased recognition and responsibility, and release time, have potential for providing appropriate support. Several alternative models for providing assistance and a curriculum for the delivery system according to the RITE framework are presented in detail.

Callen, M. F., Hall, G. E., Joyce, B., Lawrence, G., & Orlich, D. C. (1983). Inservice education. *Practical Applications of Research, 5*(3).

This research showed that in schools where the principal takes an active role in the implementation of new programs, the programs have a greater chance of success. In those schools where the principal does not actively participate, the programs are doomed to failure.

Hall, G. E., Rutherford, W. L., & Griffin, T. H. (1982). *Three change facilitator styles: Some indicators and a proposed framework*. R & D Report No. 3134. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association.

Hall found that the role of the principal as a change facilitator does not function well at staff development seminars and workshops because principals deliver interventions on a daily basis through a variety of informal and incidental interactions.

McLaughlin, M. W., & March, D. D. (1978). Staff development and school change. *Teachers College Record, 80*(1), 69-94.

McLaughlin and Marsh concluded that the attitude of the building principal is critical to the long-term results of a change-agent project. If the principal shows continued support for the project, the potential for long-term commitment from the faculty is increased.

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Strong instructional leadership is a key factor for teachers learning at work, while weak instructional leadership is a barrier to the same.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE LIFE OF A MENTOR

- *Novice Teachers and Novice Mentors*
- *Rewards*
- *Frustrations*
- *Relations with Others*
- *What Happens to Established Friendships?*

Participating mentors suggested this chapter. After writing several vignettes about their work with other teachers, one mentor asked if they could write about what being a mentor teacher feels like. What were the concerns about conducting demonstration lessons and coaching teachers? What were the rewards and frustrations of their new role? How did the mentorship affect their relations with other teachers? With principals? With their students? And with their families? The mentors agreed that their legacy for future mentor teachers would not be complete without these added cases.

The vignettes in this chapter address the above questions. They describe the vulnerability of new mentor teachers asserting their new role. They also examine the tradeoffs that some mentors faced — increased professional development and recognition versus compromised personal relationships.

NOVICE TEACHERS AND NOVICE MENTORS

Ready to Quit

I Knew What I was Doing, Still....

The vulnerability of both novice teachers and novice mentors are described in this section. "Ready to Quit" illustrates the difficulty of a young woman placed in an inner-city classroom. She is unprepared for what she is about to face, despite previous experience. The case demonstrates the importance of support for beginning teachers. It is highly likely that Karen would have quit teaching if it were not for constant support from her mentor teacher.

"I Knew What I Was Doing, Still. . ." shows a novice mentor's hesitation to assist individual teachers. Mentors often ask themselves, "Who am I to assist other teachers?" Giving demonstration lessons and coaching other teachers is risky. Mentors are not above criticism and can fail as mentors. If that happens, higher status and higher pay are difficult to justify. Like novice teachers, novice mentors need training and constant support for their new responsibilities.

Ready to Quit

It was the second semester, and I was a second year mentor when I was assigned to Karen. Karen was a fifth grade teacher at another school. She was motivated and explained to me that she felt like she was failing at what she liked to do most. She tearfully explained at our first meeting:

I am fresh out of college, but my first student teaching assignment was with a middle-class group of gifted sixth graders, and I had a great time. I also had the opportunity to work with seventh and eighth graders during intersession. The next semester I was involved in a team teaching situation in a school with students of low socioeconomic status and various ethnicities. I was in charge of 60 second and third graders, and I had to teach three directed lessons. After that I thought I could tackle the world.

My first job was as an Achievement Goals Program substitute. I worked primarily reteaching skills to sixth graders who had not passed mastery tests. Most of them were bigger than I and had serious behavior problems. My immediate supervisor told me that after dealing with those children I would be ready for anything. Ha!

None of my experiences prepared me for what I have encountered this past semester. When the principal first showed me my class, my thoughts were of how little and cute they were to be fifth and sixth graders. These thoughts exited my mind as quickly as they had entered when I heard one of my "cute little girls" swearing like a sailor. But she was the least of my problems. I had one student who thought "nigger" was the first name of everyone in class, including me; another who came to school with multiple monkey bites on her neck and below; another whose quest in life was to find out whether or not I was a virgin; still another who was so enamored of his new teacher that he did not function the entire first semester except to tell the other children how he was going to make me his woman. And last but not least, charming little Barrick, who not only asked me to disrobe, but also confided to another student that the only reason I kept them after school was because I wanted to have sex with them.

To make matters worse, 90 percent of my students were below grade level in all subjects. On top of that, I was assigned to a bilingual classroom with a Spanish vocabulary that consisted entirely of *si*, *no* and *gracias*. After two weeks of this madness I was ready to quit. So you see why I feel this way.

I combined Karen's nine reading groups into three, focused most of my attention on discipline and, for an entire month, found some time to visit Karen's room about four times a week. Many times it was only for ten minutes. I used many of the days I had a substitute to observe her.

At the end of the year we could both see that some progress had been made. Karen is back this year, needs little help, has her class under control, and feels good about it. She told her principal: "I could not have lasted had it not been for my mentor. Thank God for the mentor program."

I Knew What I Was Doing, Still . . .

I had been asked by the chairman of the English department in my school to teach a workshop about using demonstration techniques in teaching vocabulary. After the workshop Dan, a new teacher at the school, asked if it would be all right if he came to my class to observe how this actually worked "with real students."

Dan is about six feet, six inches tall, but not very imposing despite his height. He was a mixture of hesitant criticism and diffidence. Somehow, at the time, I did not see the shyness but only the potential criticism. I remember thinking, "Real students? Does he think it will be different (worse) with real students?" However, I told him to feel free to come to my class the following week, so he could observe a lesson firsthand. I was flattered that he wanted to observe, but I still had a funny feeling of nervousness, almost as if I had to prove something, even though I knew what I was doing. After all, I had developed this whole system of teaching vocabulary. Still . . .

Dan arrived halfway through the lesson. He sat in the back, a furrow between his brows the entire time. When the bell rang, Dan came up to speak to me. "I'm very impressed with this," he said, and I could hear the unspoken "but . . ." in his voice.

"Yes?" I said. I could feel that tiny ridge inside that rises when I feel I am about to be criticized.

"Well," Dan continued, "you're so quick at this. You have three or four examples at your fingertips for every word. I'm not sure I could do this as successfully as you."

Suddenly my rather self-centered insecurity left me. Here was a person who needed help, and I was worrying about whether he was going to be critical! I took the better part of my next day's conference period (Dan got covered for the class) and explained how I had developed the quickness he saw. I had him pick three or four words and showed him how to use my demonstration kit to demonstrate the words. I showed him how to combine words in his vocabulary lessons, so that it became easier for him to think of things to do.

Dan came to me a few weeks later and told me that he was not only using the idea of demonstrating for vocabulary, but that he understood how a teacher needs to act to gain classroom control. The last time we spoke, Dan was working on a class to teach other teachers what acting elements were needed for a teacher to control a class, especially if he or she were shy. The interesting thing is that he attributed his realization to the lessons he had observed me do, and the lessons he had subsequently taught himself using the same methods.

Teachers teaching teachers goes far beyond one lesson!

Discussion Questions

Ready to Quit

How would you help a "green" teacher like Karen?

What kinds of discipline techniques would you suggest?

How can you assist a teacher who has no knowledge of a foreign language to teach in a bilingual classroom?

How would you help Karen plan instructional units?

I Knew What I Was Doing, Still . . .

How did Dan's mentor resolve insecure feelings?

Like Dan's mentor, are you nervous about demonstrating a lesson for another teacher?

Have you had similar experiences? If yes, please describe them.

REWARDS

Challenges of a Mentorship

The Initial Approach

Achieving a mentorship can be a rewarding experience. First and foremost, mentor teachers get increased recognition and status for excellence in their craft. The mentorship provides outstanding teachers with opportunities to influence the practices of other teachers. Mentors can provide their less experienced colleagues with companionship, assurance, technical feedback on pedagogical practices, access to different models of teaching, and chances to reflect and analyze teaching practices. When the relationship with another teacher is fruitful, the mentor is rewarded with appreciative comments and friendship.

Mentors can also experience professional growth from their additional responsibilities. They learn new skills and new ideas from watching others teach. Perhaps most important, they learn about themselves as teachers.

Two cases describe the rewards that a mentorship can provide. "Challenges of a Mentorship" richly illustrates both the rewards that a mentor can gain from working with a neophyte and the personal growth that can ensue. "The Initial Approach" illuminates how one mentor teacher gained confidence in her own strengths as a result of the new title.

Challenges of a Mentorship

I started my job with C., my shining star mentee, whom I have written about before, and my other mentees by holding an informal needs assessment meeting with them. I asked the mentees what they had already learned from my predecessor, as well as from college classes. I agreed to reinforce these skills and set up workshops once a week to handle other concerns as they would arise. I also suggested doing an initial individual observation to assess the areas in which I felt they needed further support and guidance. C. and the others felt that this approach would be helpful and so we were off and running.

At my first observation of C. I watched as she instructed her students with a natural grace and style that told me I was working with a diamond. She certainly was a bit rough around the edges, but she just needed some smoothing and polishing.

Later that day, I heartily acknowledged her natural sense of teaching and praised her for her effort and care with the students. I asked her for her own assessment and what areas she wanted to work on. We chose discipline — specifically, getting students to transition from one topic to another easily and quietly — as a focal point. We talked about various approaches and I modeled one for her in class the next day: "I am looking for the quietest table to send to the door for recess," I began. Then, by patting students on the shoulder who remained still once they got in line, I showed C. that students could do what she had asked them to do. She was grateful and used that approach the rest of the year successfully.

There were many other times as well when C. would bring in other areas of concern, and we would discuss them, analyze them, and try to resolve them. Sometimes I would be the advice giver. Sometimes I would draw from her and let her come up with the ideas. Whether I had suggested or she had suggested an idea, C. was faithful in taking it back to the classroom and trying it out (unlike some of my other mentees), and I truly respected and admired her for this.

Inservice training was another way I shared what I knew with C. and the other mentees. Largely based on mentee request, I did workshops in areas that our administrators had not covered, or added to what they had done. Some of my inservice workshops included room organization, yard duty, field trips, bookbinding, and a tour of the resource rooms.

Lesson planning and getting teachers ready for their evaluations from administrators became a large part of my job. C. picked the skill that she wanted to teach, and I helped her with the step-by-step methodology and "spice" or creativity for each lesson. Once C. had planned well, I knew that her execution of the lesson would be excellent. Her evaluations proved me correct.

One of the most challenging parts of my job, however, came when C. was discouraged. She shed many tears and told me about her great frustration with administrative input that perhaps was offered in the name of assistance, yet often came across in the name of criticism and interference. When the kids were noisy and the day had fallen flat, then, too, I would listen, comfort, console, and bolster. Such emotional support brought a special closeness, and we became personal friends during this time. This greatly enhanced our work professionally.

One final role worth mentioning was that of time management consultant. I frequently offered C. and the others suggestions to shortcut or reduce their enormous workloads. Mentees have great pressures from on-the-job training as well as collegiate and home responsibilities. I learned a lot about coping with my own pressures, too, of being teacher, mentor, graduate student, and family member while I was advising them.

Perhaps the greatest reward then came from how much I learned about myself and my own abilities while I was helping others. Mentor teaching is far more demanding than I ever dreamed possible. It is also far more rewarding.

The Initial Approach

I was reassigned to a school in the middle of the year. I was excited about my new school and my newly appointed position as mentor. The inservice workshops at the Professional Development Center had me highly motivated and anxious to help teachers.

I had previously worked at a school where there was very little support by the administration for anything, and I had to have my new principal's support. The initial approach was very difficult because I waited and waited for my principal to say something to me about my new job title. I finally decided to ask her to meet with me.

My first meeting with my principal did not lessen my enthusiasm but gave me the feeling that I must not fail. I shared my copy of "Mentor Duties and Responsibilities" and assured her that I was ready to "walk on water." Needless to say, I was expected to do just that.

I was assigned to two second-year probationary teachers and one ten-year teacher. There was only one new teacher at this school, and the other mentor worked with her. My other assignments included organizing staff activities like assemblies, contests, drives, meetings, and so forth. I was also expected to have a model class and a model classroom. The region assigned me to a new teacher at another site. I was sure that I was capable of performing and adequately fulfilling the responsibilities given me. However, it took a little time for me to come to terms with the fact that I could not do everything. I decided to delegate responsibility. I found out that I was very skillful in this area.

I recruited outstanding teachers to do demonstration lessons appropriate to areas of need for the probationary-2 teachers. I set up committees to handle special programs, to help with organizing a retrieval system, and encouraged them to lead staff development seminars.

I will always remember that I believed that my success or failure was dependent on my principal. I know now that my success is dependent on me.

My apprehensions were unnecessary. My job as mentor has increased my administrator's confidence in my abilities. I'd like to add that any mentor making an initial approach either to their mentee or to their principal should do a skills inventory. Had I done this, I would have known where my strengths were.

Discussion Questions

Challenges of a Mentorship

What kinds of rewards and challenges did this mentor describe?

What kind of shared agreements did this mentor have with C.?

How did the mentorship affect her personal life?

What kinds of rewards are you expecting from mentorship?

The Initial Approach

What was this mentor's initial approach?

How did this mentor resolve the burden of the extra responsibilities?

What did this mentor learn about herself?

FRUSTRATIONS

Ambivalence

Is It Worth It?

Just Any Warm Body

Why Hasn't Someone Helped Her?

"Suggestion-Giver" Not "Order-Giver"

In addition to the rewards of a mentorship, the role also has its drawbacks. The higher status that accompanies a mentorship can affect relationships with one's peers. Some teachers are jealous and make snide comments. Others expect mentor teachers to be perfect. Two cases address these issues, "Ambivalence" and "Is It Worth It?"

Mentor teachers also resent working with teachers who they feel are incompetent. Some mentors passionately care about the quality of teaching that members of their profession offer to children, and are concerned about their professional image when they are assigned to help "untrained, inexperienced, and questionably qualified people," as in "Just Any Warm Body." They suffer when they see teachers assign what they believe are meaningless lessons, as in "'Suggestion Giver' Not 'Order Giver.'" And they resent the expectation from some principals that they can help all teachers. They also wonder how incompetent teachers can reach their third year, as in "Why Hasn't Someone Helped Her?"

Several important questions are raised. Since the legislation specifically states that mentor teachers cannot evaluate other teachers, is it appropriate to report their findings? If yes, to whom? What are the possible repercussions? What is the responsibility of the principal? In short, what authority does a mentor teacher have over incompetent teachers? In LAUSD, mentors have no real authority in such matters, but they can make suggestions for improvement.

Ambivalence

My feelings are feelings of ambivalence when I'm involved with teachers like Diane; I find myself not knowing what to say or do. Sometimes I resent being a mentor because almost everyone expects you to be perfect. I feel like I'm being watched all the time, and when I fall or make a mistake, everyone hears about it. It would be nice to be accepted as "just one of the teachers," but it is not so when you're a mentor. I wish most of my colleagues weren't so envious of my position and realized that being a mentor is really hard work.

On the other hand, I really feel great about being a mentor when my mentees are happy, and they tell me I'm doing a wonderful job. I took my mentees to visit another school to observe other teachers with different styles of teaching. Afterwards, I took them to Osage Teachers' Center for the rest of the day. This was a positive learning experience for them, and they constantly reminded me of the wonderful time they had. I guess their happiness makes it all worthwhile.

Is It Worth It?

THERE THEY WERE! I was taken by surprise when I saw my colleagues standing in the doorway. I had forgotten a committee was walking through to observe classrooms for the rewriting of the school plan.

I had been "running" for the past two days; I had been out mentoring the day before (I had stayed with one teacher until 4:00); I had been in a night class after that. Two days before I had been out of my classroom again working on this same school plan. I had walked in that morning and had gone straight to my desk to prepare the materials for changes in three centers. At the bell, I had gone directly to a grade-level meeting.

Only now, as the children were quietly working and the teachers began walking in, was I finally able to look around the room. IT WAS AN ABSOLUTE MESS! Paper lay askew at a couple of the centers; an art table had scraps all around it, and the custodian had missed sweeping my room again. Part of a bulletin board was dangling off the backing. How did that happen? The children's desks were a dull grey color awaiting their washing on the "big day" — open house. New supplies were heaped on the table nearest the doorway, of course, left by the monitor the day before.

So, there I was — the always planned, perfectly organized, and in control mentor — standing in a room that looked like a pigsty. I was devastated. It didn't matter that the room was beautifully decorated and well organized, or that the centers were stimulating and educationally meaningful, or that the art bulletin board was magnificently arranged with the children's work, or even that the whole class was on task! None of that mattered to me. I, the mentor, was standing in a dirty room! I was failing at one of the first things taught to every new teacher. I was failing in front of my peers, in front of some who had reservations about mentors already.

I couldn't help but wonder if it was all worth it — this grandiose idea of upgrading the profession through mentoring. It was so easy to fail miserably in the little things.

Just Any Warm Body

"Doesn't Ms. Jones have a mentor?" asked the principal sarcastically with one eye on me and the other on the complaining office manager.

The truth was that Ms. Jones had been through two mentors and a vice-principal. She was one of those new teachers who was being observed very carefully for possible dismissal. Ms. Jones was proving to be emotionally unstable, and we were all worried about the children in her care. Primary school children did not need to be subjected to a teacher who could trip over a television cord, fall to the ground, and then begin screaming at the top of her lungs for help. Even small children could not be convinced that their teacher was O.K., when she would just leave the room in the middle of the day and go to a neighboring classroom to inform the teacher that she felt like going home! No, children didn't need someone like this, but in these days of teacher shortages, our district had practically hired any and all "warm bodies" off the street, to use the words of a district official.

Furthermore, the last thing I needed was someone as obviously troubled as Ms. Jones to continue questioning my position as mentor. Even working with teachers I thought would eventually become satisfactory contributors to my profession was giving me doubts. I had thought often in my year and a half as a mentor: "How much am I sabotaging the quality of my profession by trying to mentor untrained, inexperienced, and questionably qualified people for teaching? How many children are being penalized with chaos because the public has too long viewed teaching as glorified baby-sitting, and because few people want that kind of prestige?" Well, the public was getting what they thought now! I had thought of the many Ms. Joneses around the state who had been lured into teaching by the new higher starting salaries. And I thought of all the good three-year veterans not earning as much as the new warm-bodied recruits only because they began a year earlier in the profession. With all this, I had concluded that something was very wrong, and my principal's remarks were just reminding me of these thoughts.

My thoughts were dissolved as I heard the principal and the office manager continue to joke about Ms. Jones' inability to do her register correctly. I already knew the vice-principal had helped her do her report cards. I certainly was aware of the incoherent conversations I had had with Ms. Jones. (Interrupting a discussion about lesson plans with a question about my preference between fruits and vegetables was my idea of incoherent.) I was painfully faced with the fact that it was necessary to dismiss Ms. Jones soon, before she had tenure, but somehow all the joking seemed cruel. Even more pointed was the principal's next remark directed to me, "And I thought I was going to get some help from you with this case." Of course she meant I should have been reporting to her all the things Ms. Jones did or didn't do. Of course she knew that by law I couldn't do that kind of reporting. This at last was where it came down to the public paying the piper.

I exited the office "arena" and wondered how many other mentors were slowly and silently dying inside a little today over a Ms. Jones of their own.

Why Hasn't Someone Helped Her?

I arrived at my mentee's school prepared to observe and conference, only to find that she was absent. Why hadn't I called beforehand? I stopped in to say hello to the assistant principal. She asked me to look in on a second year teacher who had been having what she called "some real discipline problems."

Upon entering the teacher's classroom, I realized that the assistant principal's description had been far too understated! As I knocked on the door, which had the words "F--- You Miss Curtis" in bold black letters scrawled across it, I could hear pandemonium inside. My knock brought four to five students scrambling to the door. Throwing it open wildly, they loudly proclaimed my presence.

I introduced myself to Ms. Curtis, and explained why I was there. She greeted me cordially, seemingly oblivious to the chaos around her. Students were up out of their seats, some combing their hair or applying makeup; almost all were chewing gum and talking to other classmates. I saw no evidence of anything that even resembled classwork.

"We're getting ready to see a film," Ms. Curtis explained. I cannot to this day tell you what that film was about. I couldn't hear (or see) much of it over the loud talking, moving about, gum smacking, and general confusion that went on throughout the movie, with not a word from the teacher!

How did this teacher make it to probationary-2 status? Why hadn't someone helped her? All I could think of as I left that day was that she was not officially assigned to me!

"Suggestion-Giver" Not "Order-Giver"

Last November, I spent several hours observing in the classrooms of each of my mentees. I wanted to visit each one during the reading instructional time block in order to develop a better understanding of their individual management styles. During my observations I recognized a common need in all three classes: to develop a more organized and meaningful spelling program. Students were copying extensive lists, looking up definitions in dictionaries much too advanced for their grade level, and writing sentences that made little sense.

I decided to offer a mini-workshop after school to my mentees, planning to share with them some interesting and motivating techniques designed to improve students' spelling. I did a lot of preparation in anticipation of the many concerns that would arise.

However, nothing satisfied Ron. Almost every suggestion I made was answered with "Yes, but. . ." or "That won't work with my group." I've always felt that my role as mentor was that of a "suggestion-giver" rather than an "order-giver," so I encouraged him to try things in whatever degree he felt appropriate.

My two other mentees took many suggestions from the inservice and tried them in class. They gave me honest feedback, letting me know what worked and what needed to be modified. In Ron's class, students are still copying meaningless definitions and memorizing lists of words in isolation.

Reaction

Ron won't change until he wants to. As a mentor, I would continue to give him suggestions but attempt to remove yourself from responsibility of making him use them; it takes too much out of you. I see you as more valuable as a functioning mentor than as someone who is bending over backward to help someone who isn't really interested or able to accept the help. Back off and let him come to you for something meaningful. Continue to be friendly because he might need to get to know you as a person instead of the perfect mentor.

Reaction

In this case I would take the approach of thinking about the children. Ask him whether he thinks this is the best means for them to learn. Ask to see their papers or what forms of assessment he uses. Then put the pressure on him by saying the purpose of his job is to educate the children the best that he can. Depending on his response, keep putting pressure until some change comes about.

Reaction

You approached this situation with positive and meaningful alternatives. I would probably have taken this matter with Ron a step further.

I would have told Ron to expect me in his class on a specific day and time to demonstrate that indeed his students could benefit and understand this program in some capacity. After this demonstration I would discuss certain areas of modification, but I would certainly impress upon him the importance of reorganizing and reevaluating one's program.

Discussion Questions

Ambivalence

Why did this mentor say that her feelings about the mentorship are ambivalent?

What was positive? Negative?

How do you feel about being a mentor teacher?

Is It Worth It?

Why was this mentor feeling exasperated?

How do you feel about being "on display" at any time?

How do you plan to handle the extra demands on your time?

Just Any Warm Body

Why was Ms. Jones' mentor frustrated?

How did this mentor's principal exacerbate the situation?

What will you do when you see incompetent teachers in the classrooms?

Why Hasn't Someone Helped Her?

What would you do if you "unofficially" observed chaos in a classroom?

Whose responsibility is it to help needy teachers who are not assigned to a mentor?

"Suggestion-Giver" Not "Order-Giver"

Several mentors reacted to this vignette. What would you do if you saw incompetent teaching and the teacher refused to use any of your suggestions?

How might you have dealt with Ron?

Relations with Others

What Happened to Mentor Teachers?

The Perils of Becoming a Mentor

My Life as a Mentor

Many qualified teachers hesitate to apply for a mentorship because they are concerned about the reaction of their colleagues. Will they be applauded or will they be rejected? In our interactions with several mentor teachers, we have seen evidence of both kinds of reactions. One extreme response was made during an informal meeting with mentor teachers from many districts. A mentor noted that after serving one year as mentor teacher she would not apply again because of the adverse reaction of her colleagues.

Mentors are also concerned about other aspects of the mentorship. Several mentors feel guilty leaving their own students with a substitute. They wonder how they can add responsibilities to an already full-time job. The cases in this section address all of these issues.

"What Happens to Mentor Teachers" portrays a range of experiences, from discomfort with negative comments from some of the mentor's colleagues to pleasure with increased recognition from the administration. This mentor also touches on feelings of guilt from being forced to compromise her students and her family because of the added burden of the mentorship.

In the second case, "The Perils of Becoming a Mentor Teacher," the mentor describes her surprise when many of her "friends" made snide remarks and refused to have lunch with her (e.g., "You should eat with the administrators"). This vignette also touches on the pain some teachers experience when they are not selected.

"My Life as a Mentor" describes a mentor who did not experience "sour grapes" from the other teachers. This mentor teacher had already provided assistance to novices and other teachers before being selected as a mentor; maybe this made a difference. Nonetheless, the mentor initially maintained a low profile, both to help those colleagues who were not accepted to save face and to provide an opportunity to ease into the new role.

What Happens to Mentor Teachers?

As soon as my name appeared in the spotlight because I was a new mentor teacher for the school, I started receiving many negative comments.

Every time Mr. Alex Complain would see me, he would rub it in. He'd say things like the following:

"You get $4000.00 more a year. . . . Why don't you take me out to dinner?" (He's married with two children.)

"You have sub days for someone to cover your class! You really have it made."

Seeing the new briefcase I purchased on sale at California State University, Los Angeles, "Oh, I see you are now making progress in life . . . an expensive leather briefcase."

"My, my! Now you get as much money as a vice-principal."

"I can't talk to you anymore; you're no longer one of us. You're a mentor teacher."

Comments like these would make me feel uncomfortable. But I'd try to ignore them and not get upset. It would bother me, and I remember telling my husband Mr. Complain's latest comment about me being a mentor teacher. Luckily, he wasn't my mentee so I didn't have to deal with him that closely. Eventually, about four or five months later, he stopped making this type of comment. Maybe he got tired. I just ignored him so he just stopped bothering me.

The ESL coordinator and another ESL teacher also made negative comments. Their comments weren't as frequent. Some of their comments were the following:

"You are out of the classroom again!"
"You can really take it easy now — just call someone to sub for you and take the time off out of mentor funds."
"You're a mentor teacher; you can afford to go."
"Now that you are $4000.00 richer, you don't need to sub during your off-track time."

Positive feelings were derived from the administration. It seemed that now I had moved up a rank higher than the regular teacher. It seemed that now I could be trusted more with information about teachers that were having a difficult time teaching. I felt privileged to hear some of the problems they were having with some teachers. Being a mentor teacher allowed me to do staff inservice workshops and to be thanked in public for having done a good job. Many times I was asked to mentor some teachers that were not assigned to me.

My students were also affected by my being a mentor teacher. They suffered and missed me whenever I was out mentoring. I always tried to get the same substitute, but it still was not the same. Many times my directions were not followed, and my students got behind, or they were just not taught properly. It hurt me because I consider my students as my own, and like a mother, no one can take my place. Even though I did have substitute days and substitute hours, I tried not to be out if it wasn't absolutely necessary. I teach English as a second language in a junior high school.

My family was also affected. After working every hour at school, by the time I got home I was exhausted. Sometimes I had a difficult time sleeping because I had so many things on my mind, important things that needed to be done. And then there is the mentor log that needs to be turned in . . . I haven't done it yet . . . not enough time.

The Perils of Becoming a Mentor

When I heard about the mentor program, I thought it was a very good idea, but I was reluctant to apply. After reading the requirements for the position, I knew I had met them, yet I was reluctant to try. After many encouraging words from my friends and the command of my vice-principal, I sent in my application.

I never dreamed I would even get the appointment for an interview. So when the letter came I was excited and surprised. I shared what I thought was great news with everyone, and that's when the attitudes began to change.

Only my best friend and I got the appointment for interviews. The other people who had applied were a little huffy. They did not come right out and say it but gave little nasty comments like "I guess our school won't have another mentor," and "Well, we have one mentor teacher already, so I guess that's why I didn't get an interview." I felt guilty and did not mention the interview anymore. As the time for the interview approached, I became more nervous. I sought support from everybody. My principal and vice-principal were extremely supportive, and my best friend was great. We interviewed each other to prepare, and she told me everything would be fine if I just did what I do everyday.

The interviewing committee did not tell us the exact day they were coming. During their first visit, our school was doing progress reports, and they did not feel I would be doing enough directed teaching. The committee returned a week later. I had had no sleep. Both my daughter and I had colds, and she had kept me up all night. My nose was red, my eyes were running, and I felt miserable. But I knew the committee was coming, so I came to work anyway.

My class was perfect that day. They knew we had company, and they behaved like little angels. The interview went well, and I felt relieved that it was over. I asked my friend how she felt her interview went, and she said she felt it went well.

After one week I received a letter saying I was accepted. I was happy, and once again I began to share my good news, thinking everyone would be happy for me. Boy, was I wrong! They said that I only got the job because I was friends with the vice-principal, and they did not see why I got the job. That lasted a couple of weeks. Then my friend got her letter saying "please apply again," and then the mess really started. (I am very lucky my friend was not angry with me, but she was disappointed.) People began asking me purposely in front of her, "How come you got to be a mentor, and Jan did not?" and, "How do you feel taking the job away from your friend?" People stopped eating lunch with me because, they said, "Since you have made mentor, you should eat with the administrators." Everytime I wore a dress to work, they said, "Oh! Where are you going today to mentor?" or "Why are you so dressed up? Are you going to mentor today?" I have always worn dresses to work and taken pride in my appearance, so this job did not change that.

I remember asking a question to a fellow teacher, and she said, "You are being paid four thousand dollars, you should know," or "You can find it out; they do not pay me enough to help you!"

I have dealt with all the negative jabs and casual little insults, and they seemed to make me determined to do a better job. Besides, there were still a lot of people who were genuinely happy for me, including my best friend.

My Life as a Mentor

It has been with amazement that I have listened to fellow mentors complain about how some of their colleagues have reacted to them since they were selected as mentor teachers. Since my skin is relatively thin when it comes to dealing with peers, I am extremely grateful that my experience has been different from that reported by other mentors. I believe that more information is needed to form any conclusions from teacher remarks to mentors and about mentors which are of a negative nature. It is not known if people make sarcastic remarks because they did not get the information about the program in the first place, did not take the initiative to apply for the position, felt that they would not be selected if they did apply, applied and were rejected, or completely misunderstand the role of a mentor teacher.

I did not apply initially because I did not want to risk being transferred to another school. I was already helping teachers who either obviously needed help and did not resist my overtures, or openly asked for help. With the advent of the Emergency Provisional Program, I waded in and demanded that I be allowed to help in order to keep from stepping over bodies by the time of the first open house. I was to guide the new teachers at least through the opening days of enrollment and roll book preparation. I formally observed and conferenced with some teachers. The stipend seemed too small to give up the little kingdom that I had built.

When our single mentor asked me to reconsider and apply, I explained all of my feelings with emphasis on the fear of being transferred from what I consider to be a second home. She pointed out that if a move was demanded, I could always ask to be removed from the program and forego the stipend. Additionally, she pointed out according to her information from meetings she attended, they needed mentors badly enough that they would not move people but would appoint sufficient numbers to insure coverage at all schools.

The process of application and acceptance was quite ego boosting. Not only was I asked to participate by a colleague whom I admired, I was accepted and began being paid for a job that I always had felt I should receive extra money for doing. However, I was initially defensive because there were many excellent teachers senior to myself who did not appear on the acceptance list. I maintained a low profile initially because I was fearful of criticism from those people. I was also slightly awed by the job the district expected from mentors and was not sure that I would be highly successful.

I am not sure that my initial attitude was critical, but it probably was a factor in not antagonizing critics. No one has asked me what I do for the extra money. No one has made it clear that a particular problem should be assigned to me because, after all, I was being paid extra. No one has questioned me about being singled out as being somehow better. I have felt no pressure from colleagues at all, including those with whom I have always had difficulty getting along.

More importantly, the new title has done some very positive things for me. I have a new attitude. I believe that I have always been, more or less, a role model, but now I find it necessary to remind myself of this constantly. I never fail to greet a colleague with a smile, and frequently go out of my way to make small talk or simply to listen. I make an effort to be upbeat and positive about today as well as tomorrow. I have rejected cynicism absolutely and try to talk others out of it as well. I feel more confident about being assertive with the principal and his assistants. When the assistant principal remarked that he did not understand why he was left out of the new teacher meetings when, after all, he was charged with school curculum, I found it quite easy to invite him to the meetings. This did not change my mind that it was we mentors who could do the superior job. I was pleased to accurately predict that he would attend once and not return.

My ability to satisfy the new responsibility has not been diminished by criticism or complaints. I would have been very sensitive at the outset and greatly bothered by "sour grapes" types of comments made to me or about me. What we mentors do is now general knowledge among our staff. I am sure that the best course is to make no important announcements of congratulations but let the job get done naturally and save the feelings of the people who for one reason or another are "wantabee" but aren't.

Discussion Questions

What Happens to Mentor Teachers?

This mentor received many negative comments from her colleagues after being selected as a mentor teacher. How have your colleagues reacted to your new title?

How did the administrators respond to this mentor?

How did the mentorship affect this mentor's students and family?

How will you handle the additional responsibilities?

The Perils of Becoming a Mentor

What were the perils that this mentor described?

Did you experience similar "sour grapes"? If yes, how have you responded?

How did the administrators react to your new status?

My Life as a Mentor

Why do you think that this mentor's colleagues supported her selection?

What positive things have happened to this mentor?

What positive things have happened to you since you were selected as a mentor teacher?

WHAT HAPPENS TO ESTABLISHED FRIENDSHIPS?

Friends and Mentors

Observation by one's colleagues is a rare occurrence. Teachers are seldom given opportunities within their tight teaching schedules to formally watch each other teach. The mentor program changed this tradition of isolation. Suddenly time was allotted for some teachers to watch others in their classrooms. Neophytes could learn new models of teaching from observing veterans. Mentors could provide support for their colleagues based on on-site experience. In short, the mentor program gave teachers access to learn from each other.

Sometimes, however, teachers feel threatened when they are observed by their colleagues. This case describes one mentor teacher's experience observing a friend whose anxiety about impressing the mentor interfered with her teaching. In reflecting on the experience, the mentor asked, "How, in the mentoring relationship, does one change from fear of making a mistake in front of a friend to wishing the opportunity to show off to the same friend?"

Friends and Mentors

Lacy came to my school as a teacher trainee the year before I became a mentor teacher. I was immediately impressed with her self-confidence and positive attitude. We shared the same science classroom since I was in another department part of the day. We also shared the same desk and file cabinet, and I provided a key for all the supply cabinets. The bulletin boards soon blossomed with life. I encouraged her to treat the room as if it were exclusively hers. Fish tanks and terrariums soon appeared, as did nutrition and lunchtime students for conversations with their "neat new teacher." We rapidly became personal friends, sharing anecdotes of our personal lives over midmorning coffee.

My program changed the second semester, and I moved to the art department. A year later I became a mentor teacher and she my mentee. Our contacts were very friendly and easy based on the friendship which had already been established. In due time, I scheduled a pre-observation conference and set up an observation date. I was looking forward to the visit as I knew from watching her teach the previous year that she was quite comfortable and skilled in the classroom.

I arrived several minutes before her class was to begin on the appointed day and was greeted by her at the door. Although her dress had always been quite professional, it was obvious that she had dressed carefully this day. She could have stepped into an elegant dinner party and not been noticed. Her tone of voice and manner were not in the relaxed fashion that I was accustomed to and expected. As class began, it became immediately obvious that she was nervous. Her relaxed and well-paced presentation style was replaced by stiffness and skipping around. Parts of the lesson were omitted. I most missed her easy sense of humor which I'd noticed while casually observing her the year before.

At the post-observation conference we went through the typical debriefing with the usual compliments and discussion on what had occurred. Near the end of the conference I asked her if she had been nervous. She replied that she had been very nervous. "Why?" I asked, when she had been very comfortable with me being in and out her room the year before. After all, we were friends long before I came to observe her formally. She replied that she was very fearful of making a mistake. Because of our personal friendship, she wanted to impress me and was worried that I might be disappointed. She stated further that, for her, the closer she was to someone, the worse the nervousness and anxiety would become.

This was an eye-opener for me as it presented an aspect of observation which was precisely the opposite of what I had expected. How, in the mentoring relationship, does one change from fear of making a mistake in front of a friend to wishing the opportunity to show off to the same friend?

Discussion Questions

Friends and Mentors

Why did the mentorship affect this mentor's relationship with her mentee?

How might the mentor have prevented the teacher's anxiety?

How do you feel about observing your friends? What can you do to diminish the potential threat?

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bird, T. (1986). *The mentors' dilemma*. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development.

Based on the findings from a 1985 survey of district coordinators and case studies of ten districts implementing the program, Bird examines first year implementation of the California Mentor Teacher Program, and makes recommendations to the state legislature on its future. The mentors' dilemma stems from the opportunity to create instrumental status differences among teachers (the mentorship). "The mentor program places teachers between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, they must make a favorable difference in other teachers' classrooms to keep their responsible positions. On the other hand, there is an absence of traditions, organizational arrangements, and norms of interaction that would allow or enable mentors to do enough, with other teachers, to earn their extra pay and resources."

Bird, T., & Little, J. W. (1985). *From teacher to leader: Training and support for instructional leadership by teachers*. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development.

As most schools are now organized, few teachers can acquire the perspective, skills, identities or standing of instructional leaders. Training and support activities are needed to give teachers direct assistance in creating and filling this new role. This essay describes the teacher-as-leader role and explores ways that district officials, principals and other teachers can support teacher-leaders.

Hanson, S., Shulman, J., & Bird, T. (1985). *California Mentor Teacher Program case study: Implementation in the Orchard Unified School District, 1984-1985*. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development.

This study describes the first year implementation of the mentor program in a medium-size school district where mentors offered confidential assistance to teachers on a request basis. The relations between mentors and, primarily, experienced teachers who worked closely together are described through vignettes based on interviews. Issues raised through the vignettes include hesitancy by some teachers to request assistance; the tendency by mentors to diminish status differences between themselves and the teachers with whom they worked; the scarcity of evidence that mentors had a substantial effect on teachers' classroom performances; jealousy and "sour grapes" of a small group of teachers toward mentors; and some awkwardness between principals and mentors concerning the confidentiality of mentors' work with teachers.

Little, J. W. (1986). Teachers as colleagues. In V. Koehler (ed.), *Educator's handbook: Research into practice*. New York: Longman.

This chapter examines issues of teacher colleagueship — what differences colleagues make, what teachers do as colleagues, and the necessity of supporting collegial activities. Little celebrates close, rigorous, enduring work among teachers on fundamental issues of teaching and learning, but cautions that such instances are rare in schools today. For teachers to work often and fruitfully requires optimum conditions on all fronts: (1) demonstrated value placed on shared work; (2) opportunities for shared work prominent in the daily schedule; (3) a compelling purpose for working together and a sufficiently challenging task; (4) adequate material resources and human assistance; and (5) recognition for the accomplishments of individuals and groups working together.

Shulman, J. (1986). *Opportunities of a mentorship: The implementation of the California Mentor Teacher Program*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Through the presentation of selected vignettes based on interviews with teachers who worked with mentors, this paper suggests that the mentorship has provided opportunities for teachers to assert leadership in their profession and to support school improvement. Interactions with mentors can also begin to transform the current norm of isolation and autonomy among teachers to one of collegial consultation. The paper offers an agenda of organizational support for supporting the mentor program.

Shulman, J., & Hanson, S. (1985). *California Mentor Teacher Program case study: Implementation in the Waverly Unified School District, 1984-1985*. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development.

This study describes the first year implementation of the mentor program in one of the largest school districts in California. One interesting finding was that teachers were generally less hesitant to seek assistance when mentors introduced themselves than when teachers were left to seek assistance on their own. It seemed that teachers interviewed felt that something must be wrong before they should ask for help. In short, assistance offered by mentors as "routine business" was more effective than waiting for teachers to request help.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CASE LITERATURE FOR MENTOR TEACHERS

The *Mentor Teacher Casebook* represents Far West Labortory's first attempt in developing case material written by experienced teachers. Research-based vignettes were used to stimulate the development of new vignettes. The casebook was directed primarily at school personnel — mentor teachers, staff developers, and administrators. Initial pilot testing of the cases in inservice activities suggest that these vignettes stimulate discussion of mentor issues and reflection on personal practices. The vignettes may also serve as precedents for action and as a basis for developing principles of practice.

The mentors who worked on this collaborative project with Far West Laboratory have been uniform in their praise for using case material in staff development. They note that writing the vignettes helped them to reflect on their practices with new teachers and raised their consciousness about the dimensions of the mentor's role. Equally important to the mentors was the opportunity to share experiences and concerns with their colleagues and to learn alternative ways of handling diverse situations. Each case became a precedent for future action. The mentors learned that they were not alone — that their experiences were not unique instances. The following are representative comments from mentors who helped to write this book.

> "The vignette experience has been a powerful one. I have had the opportunity to reflect upon myself and my work. I feel that the experience would not have been as meaningful, however, if it had not been coupled with the classroom sharing sessions. Not only did I need to write about my own experiences, I also needed to hear about others as well. . . . I realized that I was not alone. The sharing sessions provided some insight into how to deal with problem mentees."
>
> "Writing about my experiences as a mentor has caused me to focus on the individuals I deal with in terms of their uniqueness as people, and not just as new teachers. . . . The writing forced me to slow down from the hectic pace of doing the job and to reflect on how I was doing it."
>
> "Writing mentor experiences has been valuable because it has made me reflect on what went on and how I perceived the experiences I had. It made me change some strategies and focus on others. Sharing has been valuable because we learn from others and we also can find out that we are not the only ones going through the experience. Sharing them has given us other viewpoints and approaches."
>
> "When you write about something, you have an opportunity to analyze it. It [writing vignettes] has raised my consciousness level to plan for my observations just as I plan my lessons for my class. . . . The discussions have given me insights into other ways of handling problems. I feel I am more tuned into my responsibilities as a mentor."

Next Steps

What has been achieved in this casebook? What's missing? What has been achieved is a series of compelling vignettes about how novice mentors asserted (or attempted to assert) their new role of supporting novice teachers. The mentors addressed such questions as: What were the challenges, successes, and failures with their assigned colleagues, and why? What went into developing a constructive relation with another teacher? What were the limitations in providing assistance (e.g., appropriate match of content area and grade level)? In what ways did mentor teachers provide assistance? How did the new status of mentorship affect the mentors' relations with others? The vignettes presented here have merely scratched the surface in addressing these questions. Those that were accompanied by reactions from other mentors offer a multiple perspective to the situations described.

Grouping cases by themes has helped to initiate the development of a category system of mentor issues. Some of the issues were discussed in detail, and questions that need further attention were raised.

What's missing is any concerted attention to the influence of subject matter on the nature of a mentor's assistance. Some of the mentors alluded to their course content, but there was no systematic effort to document how the unique features of each content area contribute to the substantive assistance for teachers. Further, most of the mentors described their assistance to neophytes in terms of specific suggestions that would improve instruction. Few mentors described the use of reflective interviewing and problem-solving during the post-observation conferences. While providing suggestions is often appropriate, especially at the beginning of a novice's year, asking the right questions that engage a teacher in a reflective analysis of his or her own teaching will help teachers learn how to ask their own questions and, ultimately, become independent learners. This kind of facilitating is relatively new to staff development and requires extensive training in research and the principles of advising. Needed are cases by veteran coaches to provide examples of how the process works and establish precedents for mentors who are learning how to coach.

In contrast to professions like law, medicine, and social work, a teacher's own account of teaching has no official place in the discourse of schooling. We hope that this casebook will stimulate teachers to write their own personal accounts of their experiences. With the development of a professional case literature, teachers will finally have the tools they need to learn from one another.

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